John Howard Yoder on Christian Nonviolence
and the *Haustafeln*

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate Program in Religion in the Graduate School of Duke University

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One of the focuses of John Howard Yoder’s theology is Christian nonviolence. From the teaching and example of Jesus, who dealt with the evil in the world and defeated it through obedience to the will of God to the point of dying on the cross, Yoder derives the normative Christian stance of nonviolence. It is expressed in the life of the disciples in their suffering with Christ the hostility of the world as bearers of the kingdom cause and in their living out the suffering servanthood in place of dominion. For Yoder, subordination is how Christ’s model of servanthood is carried out into the concreteness of family life, and it is most extensively explored in his essay, “Revolutionary Subordination,” in *The Politics of Jesus*.

This dissertation is an attempt to read household codes in the New Testament, especially Col. 3:18-4:1, together with Yoder, with a special emphasis on the husband/wife relation. Due to an exceptionally controversial character of Yoder’s essay, it seeks to understand his main points, while identifying the elements that have caused strong opposition. The fact that these *Haustafel* texts have been historically abused to legitimate oppression and exploitation of persons poses a warning in one’s endeavor to interpret them. Particularly telling is Americans’ experience around slavery during and after the Civil War. The conflicting interpretations of the Bible between the proslavery camp and the abolitionists leave us in a hard place in addressing the issue of women’s status in the household and in society.
Through examining key debates on the *Haustafeln* in the biblical scholarship focused on James Crouch and David Balch; two alternative views on the subject in theological ethics – Yoder and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza – and further discussions of their views aided by theologians such as Gordon Kaufman, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Jeffrey Stout, this study addresses issues found in Yoder and Schüssler Fiorenza. It concludes that Yoder’s undue reliance on David Schroeder and his refutation of Martin Dibelius have led him to overlook the preexisting schema that was adopted and Christianized by the early church, and that he fails to name patriarchy a sin. Schüssler Fiorenza’s problems are found in the areas of the biblical canon, tradition and democracy. The relevance of the slavery debates to this study is revisited through discussions of Mark Knoll and Dale Martin, and Yoder’s nonviolent kingdom ethic is compared to Paul Ramsey’s just war theory and backed up by Rowan Williams, Bernd Wannenwetsch, and Sarah Coakley.
Dedicated to Hee-Soo, my husband and best friend
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It has been such a long journey that I was not always sure whether I could finish writing my dissertation. Now that I stand at its ending point, I am happy to see that the questions, which prodded me so hard that I came all the way here from Korea looking for their answers, have been at least in an oblique way addressed in this study. My studies at Duke were challenged from the very beginning by the economic crisis that hit Asian countries hard in 1997, when I started my M.Div. years. Without the encouragement of Maurice Ritchie who was the director of the Field Education office and preceptor of my CM 10 class, and without the generous scholarships that the Divinity School has granted in my M.Div. and Th.M. programs, that the Graduate School and AFTE (A Foundation for Theological Education) have given in my Ph.D. program, I would not have been able to come this far. I also owe a lot to professors, such as Teresa Berger, who now teaches at Yale, Amy Laura Hall, who helped me become a John Wesley Fellow, and Willie Jennings, who has always shown confidence in me. Their unwavering support and love have kept me going. I thank them greatly.

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Introduction

This is the study of John Howard Yoder on Christian nonviolence and the *Haustafeln*: how he reads the biblical passages that have traditionally been called the household codes and how Christians, as faithful disciples of Christ, are supposed to read them. Since the earliest days Christians have deliberated how they could lead their lives “in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27).\(^1\) Unfortunately, their sense of faithfulness to the gospel has often been compromised and their lives have consequently been characterized by complacency. Relations within their households have been no different. Whenever they face hard choices, obedience of faith readily gives way to “rational,” “common sense” reasoning.\(^2\) It is important to study the household codes in the Bible, not only because they are one of the biblical teachings that a “reasonable” contemporary person finds hard to accept, but also because they can lead to destructive behaviors by Christians. It is, therefore, important to try to contextualize the household codes within a wider understanding of the Christian moral life.

Christians know that one’s character matters. As Allen Verhey says, the choices that we make as Christians are “choices about our very selves, about our whole lives.”\(^3\) When one lets one’s relationship with family members be determined by Jesus’ nonviolence, one’s relations with the wider society may take the same path. It is worthwhile to struggle again with the issue of nonviolence both within the household and

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\(^1\) NRSV, unless otherwise indicated.

\(^2\) The terms are in the sense of the Enlightenment emphasis on human capacities which excludes the influences of religion and tradition on human reasoning. Also, Albert Einstein said, “Common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by age eighteen.”

outside. Of the three relationships discussed in the *Haustafeln*, this study will focus on the injunctions for wives’ submission to their husbands.

The introduction will take up the issue of why the *Haustafeln* are offensive especially to modern readers who are accustomed to the current prevalent social rhetoric of egalitarianism and equality of human beings. It will address the validity of reservations on the part of Christians to align their lives to what the texts seem to say, since these texts have been historically abused to legitimate oppression and exploitation of persons. Particularly strong has the Americans’ experience been around slavery during and after the Civil War. The arguments between the proslavery camp and that of abolitionists on the basis of conflicting interpretations of the Bible leave us in a hard place in addressing the issue of women’s status in the household and in society.

The exegesis of the Colossian text will be added to the introduction, in order for us to understand its basic structure, placement within the context and key words/concepts. As a review of the literature, it will concentrate on the Colossian *Haustafel* (3:18-4:1) – partly because the authorship of the Colossians has been less disputed compared to that of Ephesians, 1 Peter, or the Pastorals, which have similar lines of instruction, and because it has a fuller form of the directives together with the Ephesian text – while not refraining itself from commenting on the other texts as they are pertinent to the discussion. In relation to the authorship issue which has been raised against almost all the *Haustafel* texts in the Scripture, I stand with scholars who emphasize that, regardless of their authorship status, those texts are part of the canon, accepting their authority in the life of Christians.
Both in biblical scholarship and in the field of theological ethics, there have been debates about the original historical setting of these texts, to find out the way in which they should be read and applied in Christian lives. In the first chapter, some of the key debates on the *Haustafeln* in the biblical scholarship will be summarized, which will give the reader the tools with which he/she can read the texts and their theological reviews. James Crouch and David Balch, in particular, provide ample historical evidence that convinces us that the early church used a pre-existing schema that goes back to Greek unwritten laws and to Aristotle in its formulation of the ethics within the household.

The second chapter will deal with two alternative views on the *Haustafeln* in theological ethics, each focusing on one specific scholar. It will take up the view of John Howard Yoder, who, in regards to the household codes, characterizes the stance of the church within society as voluntary subordination. In his essay, “Revolutionary Subordination,” he emphasizes how radically the Stoic concept of living one’s role within society was transformed by the servanthood that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ have shown us. Later in the chapter, Yoder’s view will be contrasted with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s. In her essay, “Discipleship and Patriarchy,” written as a critique of Yoder’s argument on the *Haustafeln*, she opposes Yoder’s view that those biblical passages show that Christians accepted subordination because it was fitting in the Lord. Instead, she contends that the *Haustafeln* are “patterns of patriarchal submission”

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and “a Christianized form of Aristotelian ethics,” which have exerted their destructive influence on women and on the community of co-equal discipleship.  

The following chapters will be further discussions of the views of each of the theologians. Chapter 3 will be an extensive critique on Schüssler Fiorenza. While admitting the validity of her strong criticism of the historically-proven detrimental influence of the Haustafel trajectory on women and other subordinate people, it will identify problems in her arguments, particularly in terms of her notion of the biblical canon and the authority of Scripture, the importance of tradition, and the issue of democracy. These discussions will benefit from studies done by scholars in the biblical field and also by theologians such as Gordon Kaufman, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Jeffrey Stout.

The fourth and last chapter will critique Yoder’s essay and ask where all these guide us, seeking the best alternative that I can think of. Reading the Haustafel passages with Yoder is illuminating for the understanding of a faithful way for Christians to live, especially with his notion of Christian nonviolence. The strength of Yoder’s position is that his pacifism, his nonviolence “constitutes the heart of our worship of a crucified messiah,” which then determines Christians’ relations with one another and with the society as revolutionary subordination. In the last analysis, it will be the internal critique of Yoder, an attempt to understand the biblical teaching of the Haustafeln faithfully, with the aid one gets from the exploration of Yoder’s scholarship and of the wider range of

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6 Ibid., 141, 165-66.
related studies of theologians – such as Mark Noll, Dale Martin, Bernd Wannenwetsch, Rowan Williams, Paul Ramsey, Wayne Meeks and Luke T. Johnson.

Revolutionary subordination turns out to be the ethic of the kingdom people, who live a kingdom life while staying in this world. The conclusion furthers this realization with Brian Brock’s idea of Bible interpretation as singing the ethos of God, Sarah Coakley’s study of power and vulnerability, along with Earl Zimmerman’s study of Yoder, all of which support Yoder’s view of seeing the history doxologically as the followers of the Lamb. As indicated earlier, the challenge of reading the *Haustafel* texts today will be acknowledged and the exegesis of the Colossian code be given, before we turn to Chapter 1.

**Challenge of Reading the *Haustafeln* Today**

In *The Art of Reading Scriptures*, Ellen Davis and Richard Hays note that “[s]ome postmodern readers have come to perceive the cultural alienness of the Bible and to find it dangerous and oppressive.”⁸ They acknowledge the difficulty that the postmodern culture finds in interpreting the Bible, both in and outside the church. Indeed, there are what Phyllis Trible calls “texts of terror” in the Old Testament⁹ and those aspects of the New Testament that seem apparently irrelevant and even “morally perverse” like the

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For that matter, it can be argued that this kind of difficulties with some of the contents of the Bible surfaced long before postmodernism emerged. Heated scriptural debates on slavery in the United States have been the prominent example. Patrick Hues Mell’s treatise published anonymously in 1844 defending the proslavery position reflects such a criticism:

I know that in this age of “free inquiry” and excitement – and, I may say, of mawkish sentimentality – even the Bible is beginning to be considered too low a standard of morals. Its precepts, it is thought, many of them, were suited only to a rude and uncultivated age, and designed for such alone; but the present refined and intellectual age should take a position even in advance of it. Like the Neologists of Germany, who apply the knife to the sacred scriptures, with a freedom limited only by their inclinations, our refined moralists, in effect, take upon them to say, what precepts have become obsolete, and what should be engrafted upon the remainder to supply the deficiencies of bible morality.  

As attested by scholars, this frustration with the Bible – “too low a standard of morals,” “precepts … suited only to a rude and uncultivated age” and “obsolete” – came mostly from the abolitionist camp.

References to the debates about American slavery are apt for the present work, because Haustafel texts played a “peculiarly important” role in supporting slavery, the institution that is represented by one pair of the three listed in them – husbands/wives,

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13 Meeks, 235.
parents/children, and masters/slaves. More importantly, those debates show how an appeal to the authority of Scripture, when it is combined with, or rather driven by, self-interests\textsuperscript{14} can lead Christians to unscriptural and unfaithful paths with a blind passion. When it comes to women’s subordination, which this essay is focusing on, how should one read the \textit{Haustafel} texts, in order not to fall a prey to the same folly? Kevin Giles notes, “[t]he biblical case for slavery is the counterpart of the case for the subordination of women.”\textsuperscript{15} Carl Sanders makes a similar observation, when he says, “These hermeneutical differences” between the proslavery South and the anti-slavery North “led to different conclusions about the moral and ethical status of slavery, and provide an interesting historical parallel to contemporary debates about the application of Scripture in current ethical controversies.”\textsuperscript{16} Hence back to the slavery debates.

While both the abolitionists and the defenders of slavery appealed to the Scripture in their debates on slavery, the latter had a significantly easier task as they argued that the Old and New Testaments endorsed and legitimized the institution and practice of slavery. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese observe, they “turned to the Bible – God’s Word – to justify their ways.”\textsuperscript{17} Mell asserts that “slavery is neither a moral, political, nor social evil” and that “it is \textit{directly} sanctioned by the letter of the

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{14} I will elaborate this further in chapter 4 in relation to Mark Noll’s study.
\item\textsuperscript{15} Giles, 16.
\item\textsuperscript{16} Sanders, 1.
\end{itemize}
Scriptures.” Thornton Stringfellow’s tract published in 1841 provides a typical biblically-based proslavery argument. His thesis is fourfold:

The institution of slavery has received, in the first place,
1st. The sanction of the Almighty in the Patriarchal age.
2d. That it was incorporated into the only National Constitution which ever emanated from God.
3d. That its legality was recognized, and its relative duties regulated, by Jesus Christ in his kingdom; and
4th. That it is full of mercy.

After he uses the Old Testament passages from Genesis, Exodus, and Job to back up his 1st and 2nd points, the passages that he uses for the 3rd point are 1 Cor. 7:17, 20, 24, where it is admonished to let every person abide with God wherein he is called; Rom. 13:1-7, which teaches the followers of Christ to obey, honor, and support the human government as an ordinance of God; and particularly the household duties in 1 Pet. 2, Tit. 1-2, and 1 Tim. 6.

The Bible passages that were frequently cited and were regarded as “the major bulwarks of slavery” in the Old Testament were Genesis 9:25, 12:5, 14:14, 24:35-36, 26:13-14, Exod. 20:3-17, Joshua 9:23, 1 Kings 9:20-21 and Job, which showed that slavery was established or practiced, and Lev. 25:44-46, which was a key text for slavery that says, “it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves … You may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property”; and in the New Testament, the southern intellectuals found that slaves were

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18 Mell, 8, 10. Original emphasis.

The strongest support they found for their cause, however, was in the epistles of Paul and Peter, the majority of which are *Haustafel* texts – 1 Cor. 7:20-21, Eph. 6:5-9, Col. 3:22-4:1, 1 Tim. 6:1-2, 20-21, Tit. 2:9-10, Phlm. 10-18, and 1 Peter 2:18-19 – where the apostles unambiguously “endorsed” the institution. 21 H. Shelton Smith points out the importance of Paul’s letters to the proslavery arguments. 22

Defenders of human bondage felt much more at home in the letters of Paul than they did in the teachings of Jesus, because those documents contained specific instructions on the duties of masters and slaves. In fact, virtually every proslavery tract of any consequence explored the Pauline epistles far more exhaustively than any other portion of the New Testament.

On the other hand, the favorite New Testament texts that were used for the argument against slavery were Acts. 17:26, “From one ancestor he [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live,” and 1 Cor. 12:13, “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Antislavery apologists appealed to the spirit and general principles of love of neighbor (Matt. 22:39) and the golden rule (Matt. 7:12) that Jesus taught, as subverting the institution of human bondage. Yet southern moralists buttressed their position by saying that the law of neighbor love had already been included in the

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21 Giles, 7-13; see also Smith, 130-35.
22 Smith, 134.
Mosaic code (Lev. 19:18), and precisely because the same code ordained the institution, “the commandment of love to neighbor was entirely compatible with slavery.”

This constant appeal to the God-given order of things was made by southern intellectuals. Iveson L. Brookes attests in *A Defense of the South Against the Reproaches and Incroachments of the North* that “the true God” is “the author and owner of the institution” of slavery. He also appeals to “Grecian and Roman antiquities” where “this institution of God, slavery, so much abhorred by blind and invidious Northern Abolitionists, was the basement of their republican system of government, and the sustaining pillar of their social and political greatness.” As Giles sums it up,

In the nineteenth century the best Reformed theologians developed this tradition into an impressive biblical theology of slavery. They quoted extensively from the Old and New Testaments, they argued lucidly and convincingly, and they were able to integrate scriptural teaching into a coherent system.

The prominent Reformed theologians of the day – e.g., Robert Dabney, James Thornwell, and Charles Hodge – lined up for the defense of slavery. Their relentless contention was that “slavery was explicitly endorsed by both Testaments and to oppose that institution was a denial of the authority of Scripture.” As we will see in Chapter 4 with Mark Noll, defenders of slavery identified antislavery arguments with a denial of the authority of Scripture.

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23 Ibid. See also Stringfellow, 19-20.
24 Iveson L. Brookes, *A Defense of the South Against the Reproaches and Incroachments of the North: In Which Slavery is Shown to be an Institution of God Intended to Form the Basis of the Best Social State and the Only Safeguard to the Permanence of a Republican Government* (Hamburg, SC: Republican Office, 1850), 27.
Robert Dabney, a Presbyterian theologian of Virginia, saw the social order as “heaven’s first law” and held that “subordination of women and Negroes ‘is the inexorable condition of peace and happiness, and this as much in heaven as on earth.’”

He also wrote to his brother in a letter of 1851, “Here is our policy, then, to push the Bible argument continually, drive abolitionism to the wall, to compel it to assume an anti-Christian position.” James Thornwell, president of South Carolina College, also attacked abolitionism as “only one form of the ‘madness,’ ‘fanaticism,’ and ‘great disease’ that were convulsing both church and state.” His understanding of the conflict between abolitionism and proslavery was a dramatically expanded one:

These are the mighty questions which are shaking thrones to their centres – upheaving the masses like an earthquake, and rocking the solid pillars of this Union. The parties in this conflict are not merely abolitionists and slaveholders – they are atheists, socialists, communists, red republicans, Jacobins, on the one side, and the friends of order and regulated freedom on the other. In one word, the world is the battle ground – Christianity and Atheism the combatants; and the progress of humanity the stake.

In his mind, the South stood for “order and regulated freedom” and for “Christianity,” while the North represented all the “madness” of the day and “Atheism.”

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28 Smith, 136.
Charles Hodge of Princeton wrote, “the fact that the Mosaic institutions recognized the lawfulness of slavery is a point too plain to need proof, and is almost universally admitted.”\(^30\) His position is close to Aristotle’s, when he argued,

That it is not only the privilege, but the duty of men to live together in a regularly organized society, is evident from the nature which God has given us; from the impossibility of every man living by and for himself, and from the express declarations of the word of God.\(^31\)

Aristotle, in his *The Politics*, wrote that a slave is “by nature” another’s man and his possession: “some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right.”\(^32\) Nature also determines the superiority of the male: “Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.”\(^33\) Evangelicals’ emphasis on the Bible’s infallibility combined with a blind use of Aristotle proved to be problematic.

As the Genovese observe, the southerners “took great comfort in the Bible’s demonstrable justification of slavery,” while northern abolitionists “increasingly retreated to the swampy terrain of individual conscience.”\(^34\) In the prolonged debate with the abolitionists “the southerners were able to refine their arguments to such a point that their

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\(^{31}\) Hodge, 862.

\(^{32}\) Aristotle, *The Politics* and *The Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16-17. Aristotle’s view has been the point of contention among scholars, as we will see in the following chapters.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 17.

\(^{34}\) Fox-Genovese and Genovese, 215.
opponents found appeal to the Bible pointless.” While staunch abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison continued to insist that “slavery is prohibited by the Book of Inspiration” and that “slavery at a single blow annihilated THE WHOLE DECALOGUE,” many on the anti-slavery side “surrendered the Bible to their opponents, denouncing it as ‘the Devil’s Book’” out of frustration. Henry C. Wright wrote in The Liberator of which Garrison was the editor, “The Bible, if Opposed to Self-Evident Truth, Is Self-Evident Falsehood.”

Slavery in the south was a terrible thing. The abolitionists were right when they repeatedly proclaimed that it was a “heinous sin.” To Christians who rely on the Bible for their moral formation and ethical decisions, hard cases such as slavery present a significant hermeneutical challenge. In his article, “The ‘Haustafeln’ and American Slavery,” Wayne A. Meeks puts their question aptly: “Yet what are we to make of those cases in which an honest and historically sensitive reading of the New Testament appears to support practices or institutions that Christians now find morally abominable?” A serious question arises from the acknowledgement of the fact that the abolitionists’ intuitive reading of Scripture was “more nearly ‘correct’ in the moral sense than the more systematic exegesis of the proslavery clergy and their scholarly teachers, whose method has more in common with our own scientific exegesis.” Then, what should we say about the issues, as Meeks asks, such as “the subordination of women and the condemnation of

36 The Liberator, July 28, 1836, quoted in Meeks, 250-51.
38 Meeks, 232.
same-sex unions – arguments for which are often strikingly analogous to those used by the proslavery apologists”?

Kevin Giles’ argument is closely in line with Meeks’. Calling slavery “an example of a social structure endorsed by the Bible which can no longer be condoned,” he finds “a clear parallel … in biblical comments about the subordination of women” and acknowledges that “the Bible’s teaching on this matter is to be understood largely in the same way as the Bible’s teaching on slavery.” It is not surprising at all that the same people who found the Bible as legitimating slavery find the ground for the subordination of women in it. Hodge wrote in his commentary on Ephesians 6:7 (“Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women”): “This, as the Scriptures teach, is not peculiar to the obedience of the slave to his master, but applies to all other cases in which obedience is required from one man to another. It applies to children in relation to their parents, wives to husbands.” The rationale behind it is that “Those invested with lawful authority are the representatives of God. The powers … are ordained by God.”

A similar kind of questions arises from the part of female African American theologians who are frustrated at the black theology, which unequivocally denounces hermeneutics that has legitimated slavery on the ground of the literal reading of the Bible, and which refuses to do the same for the subordination of women. Jacquelyn Grant asks, “How can a Black minister preach in a way which advocates St. Paul’s dictum

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39 Ibid., 251. Even though the same-sex union is an important ethical issue, its discussion will be beyond the scope of the present work.
41 Ibid., 4.

Clarice J. Martin also asks,


This surely is a troubling and perplexing question, not only for African American women but, by extension, for all women.

Martin acknowledges that the \textit{Haustafel} texts have been “used to reinforce a thoroughgoing chauvinism in church and society.” They have been listed among the New Testament narratives that have exerted “profoundly … malefic and far-reaching impact” on the lives of African Americans\footnote{Martin, 206-207.} and of women in general. It is not hard to infer that the problematic uses of these passages have contributed to feminists’ almost unanimous attack on the Bible. As mentioned earlier, the logic that reinforced the legitimacy of slaveholding has also been used for the legitimization of women’s oppression and submission. Charles Hodge argues in his essay “The Fugitive Slave Law”:

The obedience which slaves owe their masters, children their parents, wives their husbands, people their rulers, is always made to rest on the divine will as its ultimate foundation. It is part of the service which we owe to God … In appealing therefore to the Bible in support of the doctrine here advanced, we are not … appealing to an arbitrary standard, a mere statute book … but we are appealing to
the infinite intelligence of a personal God, whose will, because of his infinite excellence, is necessarily the ultimate ground and rule of all moral obligation.\textsuperscript{46}

As Frank Stagg notes, those \textit{Haustafel} texts “are used to turn the ‘Good News’ into ‘Bad News’ for women.”\textsuperscript{47}

What have been at issue so far in this discussion are diverse interpretations of the Bible and its authority. Both the pro- and the antislavery debaters sought the sanction and support of their positions in the biblical texts, each with the opposite findings. And when it comes to the conflict between the biblical faith and the feminist critique on the Bible’s authority, one finds another major antagonism. Phyllis A. Bird, for example, in her 1993 J.J. Thiessen Lectures, “Feminism and the Bible: A Critical and Constructive Encounter” at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, puts this conflict succinctly:

Defenders of biblical authority typically see it as ordained by God, deriving from the nature of the Scriptures as God’s own word, inviolable and unchanging source of divine truth, and the only sure ground of Christian faith. Feminists, observing the patriarchal pronouncements and assumptions of the text (as well as its interpreters) and alert to its harmful consequences for women, commonly view those claims of divine authority as demonic, giving supernatural sanction to oppressive social forms and presenting a false understanding of human nature. In the eyes of many feminists, the Bible is an enemy of women, which must be denied authority.\textsuperscript{48}

There has been a persisting tension in the women’s movement from its inception between “the belief that the Bible as the word of God \textit{must} support the equality of male and female” and the “insistence that the Bible as a primary source and sanction of women’s

oppression (perhaps the primary source) cannot be accorded the status of divine revelation – or reveals a God who is not worthy of reverence.”

One of the axioms of feminist critique is that the Bible supports the status quo that they seek to attack and has led them to the rejection of the Bible’s authority altogether. Even among the feminists within the church, the Bible and its interpreters are regarded as the locations in which “the source of women’s oppression” is found. For them, the Bible presents “a message of bondage” and a path to darkness. Elizabeth Cady Stanton regards the Old Testament, for example, as making “woman a mere after-thought in creation; the author of evil; cursed in her maternity; a subject in marriage; and all female life, animal and human, unclean.” It is quite common to see a feminist, within the church as well as outside it, view the Bible as “simply the tool of oppressive patriarchy – and its most effective and therefore most dangerous weapon.” It is persistently regarded as “irredeemably sexist and a source and sanction of patriarchy.” What do we do with the passages of the Scriptures that are recognized by so many women and men as “morally offensive and incompatible with the message of the gospel”?

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49 Ibid., 68. Original emphasis.
50 Ibid., 20.
51 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, “Preface to Part II,” The Woman’s Bible, Part II, Comments on the Old and New Testaments from Joshua to Revelation (New York: European Publishing Company, 1898), 8. Pamela Cooper-White, The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church’s Response (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 46-54 also shows deep-rooted misogynist misconceptions and prejudices against women by presenting six stereotype-bearing myths about women in the Western culture: woman as nature, woman as eternal mother, woman as crazy, woman as subhuman, woman as bearer of sin, and woman as gateway to death.
52 Bird, 33.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., 74 n. 6.
It is the question that will be kept in mind, as biblical and theological scholars’ opinions on the *Haustafeln* will be viewed in the following chapters. Before exploring their research, however, an exegesis of a *Haustafel* text would be helpful.

**Exegesis of Col. 3:18-4:1**

**(A) Authorship**

Those who regard Colossians as Paul’s writing include N. T. Wright, David Schroeder, Peter T. O’Brien, Luke Timothy Johnson, Ralph P. Martin, F.F. Bruce, Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, while Wayne A. Meeks, Eduard Lohse, Andrew T. Lincoln, and Elisabeth Schüessler Fiorenza think that it was written by a disciple of Paul. The authorship and authenticity of the NT letters is a complicated issue and it will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 3 Section 1.

**(B) Outline**

18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. 22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, 24 since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. 4:1 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Theme — Family and Household Duties (3:18-4:1)

1) Wives and Husbands (3:18-19)

   a. Wives, be subject to your husbands (3:18)
b. Husbands, love your wives (3:19)

2) Children and Parents (3:20-21)
   a. Children, obey your parents (3:20)
   b. Fathers, do not provoke your children (3:21)

3) Slaves and Masters (3:22-4:1)
   a. Slaves, obey your earthly masters (3:22-25)
      i. Not with eye-service (3:22)
      ii. As for the Lord (3:23)
      iii. Reward from your master, Christ (3:24)
      iv. No favoritism (3:25)
   b. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly (4:1)

(C) Boundaries and Placement

This pericope is quite a self-contained one, but it is important to understand the context in which Paul locates it. Paul wants the Colossians to be “mature in Christ” (1:28) especially in face of the crisis that has been caused by the opponents teaching their “philosophy” (2:8). This “philosophy” generates a desire to observe festivals, a special diet (2:16), “self-abasement and worship of angels” (2:18), and physical asceticism (2:20-22). What they have been given in Christ is enough for perfection and they do not require more for maturity.

Thus, the subsection of 3:1-4:6, as N.T. Wright views it, “places the Christian firmly in the New Age, and requires that he or she live appropriately.”55 It consists of five parts: (1) Paul establishes the basis: Christians are already risen with Christ (3:1-4); (2) The life of the old age, with which the Colossians are to make a clean break (3:5-11); (3) Embrace the life of the new age (3:12-17); (4) Application to daily life in the household

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(3:18-4:1); and (5) Exhortation to constant prayer and Christian witness in the world (4:2-6). The Colossians are God’s chosen people, who have experienced God’s forgiveness and who belong to the new humanity. The Colossian *Haustafel*, therefore, sits comfortably as a detailed example of what their life as the new humanity would be like.

(D) Translation Problems

1) ἀγαπάω (3:19) – Johnson views it as “the self-sacrificing love that empties itself into service for others.”

Without denying its meaning in 3:19 as the husband’s “active and unceasing care for her [his wife’s] well-being,” Bruce nonetheless points out that the verb ἀγαπάω “can be used of an unworthy or self-regarding love,” too, and that it is the context that gives it fuller meaning.

James E. Crouch goes further, claiming that the word here does not designate Christian love but “the normal human love of a husband for his wife.”

His opinion is countered by Lohse’s and Lincoln’s, since they argue that the terms “to love/love” (ἀγαπάω/ἀγαπη) never appear in the household rules of the Greco-Roman society.

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2) πατέρ (3:21) – Barth and Blanke note that when the Greek word πατέρ is used in the plural (Oi πατέρες) it “can designate both parents (father and mother).” While sharing this idea, Wright adds that “it may well have an eye to the importance of the father’s role … in the upbringing of children.” While both the NRSV and the NIV take this verb as indicative (“You serve the Lord Christ”), Lincoln understands it as an imperative (“Be slaves of the Lord Christ”) especially because it underlines “the motivation in the code as a whole.” Lohse, Martin, and O’Brien also take it as an imperative.

(E) Key Words

1) ὑποτάσσεσθαι (3:18, 20, 22) refers to “taking a subordinate role in relation to another person.” It is one of the key words in this pericope, occurring every time subordinate members – wives, children, or slaves – are exhorted. It is interesting that out of thirty-eight times that this verb occurs in the NT, twenty-three of them are found in the Pauline corpus. Markus Barth says that when Paul uses the verb ὑποτάσσομαι in the “middle or passive indicatives, participles or imperatives,” as here, he “describes a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.”

60 Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, Colossians (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 443.
61 Wright, 148. See also Lohse, 159; Bruce, 165; Lincoln, 656; and Peter T. O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 44 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1982), 225.
62 Lincoln, 658.
64 Lincoln, 654.
65 Barth & Blanke, 434.
Kähler also emphasizes that when ὑποτάσσεσθαι is used, “it is an entirely voluntary decision,” on which Barth, Blanke, and O’Brien agree, while Lohse and Martin do not.66

2) ἐν κυρίῳ (3:18, 20) – Scholarly opinions are divided into two concerning the use of this phrase “in the Lord” in the Colossian Haustafel. One party regards it as a mere formal element, slightly Christianizing the traditional material of the Greco-Roman society, which is represented by Weidinger’s position.67 The other group sees “a completely new motivation” in it.68 F.F. Bruce argues that “The added words, simple as they are, transform the whole approach to ethics.”69 Barth and Blanke also stress that subordination is being emphasized “as the correct behavior of those people who have ‘put on … the new self.’”70 Lohse emphasizes that when the phrase is put together with ὡς ἀνηκεν (“as is proper,” 3:18), an element of Hellenistic moral teaching, thus forming ὡς ἀνηκεν ἐν κυρίῳ (“as is proper in the Lord”), it denotes that “the entire life, thought and conduct of believers is subordinated to the lordship of the Kyrios.”71 At the same time, Lohse shares with O’Brien and others the acknowledgement that this phrase qualifies the exhortation to submission. As O’Brien calls it, it is “a conscious qualifying of a traditional maxim,” that if parents’ (or masters’) orders are contrary to the law of Christ,
“the law of Christ must take precedence and children (or slaves) would have to obey God rather than men.”

3) ὀφθαλμοδουλία (3:22) – Occurring again in the NT only in the *Haustafel* in Ephesians (Eph. 6:6), it literally means “eye-service.” Slaves are admonished not to serve their earthly masters with eye-service as someone who seeks to please human beings, but as those who fear the Lord “in sincerity of the heart” (ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας).

Even though this exegesis is a brief one, other exegetical considerations such as form-critical and literary issues, use of sources, cultural background, relation to other New Testament texts, problems of history, and theological observations will be made throughout this paper, particularly in the process of reviewing some of the key debates in the biblical scholarship on the *Haustafeln*. The review will focus on studies in the 20th century West, especially by James E. Crouch and David L. Balch.

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72 O’Brien, 225. A similar point is made by Barth and Blanke in regards to slaves (p. 446) and also by Johnson (p. 401).
73 Barth and Blanke, 446-47.
Chapter 1. Debates on the Haustafeln in the Biblical Scholarship

As mentioned above, historically the Haustafel texts have been used for the legitimation of oppression and exploitation of persons. Scholars in both fields of biblical studies and of theological ethics have engaged in debates about the authorship of these texts and their original historical setting, trying to find a proper way to read and apply them in Christian lives. In this chapter, some of the key debates on the Haustafeln in the biblical scholarship will be summarized. Among others, Martin Dibelius, Karl Weidinger, David Schroeder, James Crouch, and David Balch stand out.

The origin and function of the household codes in the New Testament has been studied by biblical scholars, and has recently seen its considerable progress in the works of James Crouch and David Balch. Their works effectively show what the preceding scholarship has achieved as well as the results of their own. Crouch concentrates his study on the Colossian Haustafel and reaches the conclusion that its form finds its source in the Jewish-Oriental background, while Balch studies the code in 1 Peter and traces its source all the way back to Greek philosophy, especially to the Aristotelian tradition. Following their guidance gives us a good overview of key debates on the Haustafeln in the biblical scholarship, and it will throw light on our reading of the texts and provide helpful tools with which to assess their readings by theologians, especially Yoder. Crouch and Balch will help us acknowledge that the early church used an existing schema in its formulation of the household codes.

1. Previous Research on the New Testament Haustafeln
Balch points out that Alfred Seeberg is the one who did “the first serious research on the codes”\(^1\) and who first insisted on the traditional nature of the standardized ethical material, which does not necessarily reflect the particular situation of churches (B, 2; C, 13). Crouch, however, rejects Seeberg’s idea of the catechism. He agrees neither with Seeberg that the source of *Haustafeln* is found in a Jewish catechism, nor with E. G. Selwyn that the catechetical material has the Christian background (C, 14, 15, 17, 120). Rather than taking these catechism hypotheses, Crouch opts for Martin Dibelius’ idea in the early twentieth century that the *Haustafel* is “an independent, self-contained paraenetic unit,” which has since gained a growing conviction among New Testament scholars (C, 9, 18).

Dibelius’ thesis is that the Colossian *Haustafel* is “a lightly Christianized version of a code borrowed from the Stoics” (B, 2; cf. C, 18). He notes that ἀνήκεν (“as is fitting,” Col. 3:18) and εὐάρεστον (“acceptable,” 3:20) are common in Stoic literature, rather than showing specifically Christian motivations (C, 18; B, 2). The phrase ἐν κυρίῳ (“in the Lord”) is the Christianizing element in the text. Showing a number of similar codes in Late Stoicism and Hellenistic Judaism – such as Hierocles, a Stoic in the early second century A.D. – Dibelius contends that the *Haustafeln* are merely Christianized forms of a non-Christian code.

Dibelius’ thesis is defended and expanded by his student, Karl Weidinger, in 1928. He adds a few more evidences of the similar codes in Hellenistic Judaism – e.g. pseudo-Phocylides, *Maxims* 175-227; Philo, *Apology for the Jews* 7:3; Josephus, *Against Apion* ii.189-209\(^2\) – to the material indicated by Dibelius. Perhaps the biggest contribution that Weidinger’s study has made is that he calls attention to the Stoic conception of duty which “is itself but an adaptation of the ancient Greek ‘unwritten law’” (B, 2), which will be discussed more in depth later. Both Crouch and Balch emphasize the importance of Hierocles for Weidinger and for this study, that they give lengthy summaries of his excerpts in Stobaeus’ *Anthologium* (C, 67-70; B, 2-5).

One of the most significant sections, in which Hierocles deals with the three reciprocal relationships found in Colossians and Ephesians (husbands-wives, parents-children, masters-slaves), is the fourth one, “On Fraternal Love.” It shows the golden rule.

Act by every one in the same manner as if you supposed yourself to be him, and him to be you. A servant will be well treated by one who considers how he would like to be treated by him if he was the master, and himself the servant. The same principle might be applied between parents and children, and vice versa, and, in short, between all men.\(^3\)

Even though some sections of Hierocles are lost, we can find a reference also to the conduct towards parents, brethren, wife and children. Hierocles continues, “This summarizes his [the lover of his kindred] conduct towards his kindred, having already


shown how he should act towards himself, toward his parents and brothers, and besides these, toward wife and children.”

In terms of three pairs of relationships in the household which bear reciprocal duties in the NT, these quotations are significant.

Dibelius-Weidinger thesis remains “the most widely accepted explanation of the *Haustafeln*” (C, 21 n. 42). Basically, they agree that the delay of the parousia was the decisive impulse in the usage of the Stoic *Haustafel* schema by Christians who needed to come to terms with the world, to which Yoder is vehemently opposed, as we will see in chapter 2. Unlike Yoder, Eduard Lohse shows an essential agreement with their hypothesis, saying that Christians in the second and third generation asked how to lead their daily lives and that they adopted the popular philosophy of that day – “a fixed schema” – through Hellenistic Judaism.

His argument about the early Christian adoption of a fixed schema of the day is very helpful in perceiving the social context of the *Haustafeln*.

In the second and third Christian generation, answers had to be given to the many questions that pressed upon Christians in their everyday lives. In answering these questions, Christians did not renounce the world and flee it, but faced it head-on and tried to learn from the rules of life which had been formulated and practiced in Hellenistic popular philosophy. Christians took over many directives which had attained wide circulation as successful guidelines to life and its problems, and made use of them in the community’s preaching and instruction. Just as Hellenistic or Jewish traditions were often drawn upon for exhortatory material, so too traditional pattern for rules of conduct which presented tried and true examples of ethical instruction were used, in particular for the development of the so-called *Haustafeln*.  

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4 Ibid., 284.
According to Lohse, you do not find “rules for the household” in Palestinian Judaism and therefore the contents and construction of the NT Haustafeln “undoubtedly were adopted from the Hellenistic cultural milieu.” While Crouch accepts Dibelius and Weidinger’s recognition of “the nature of the Haustafel exhortations as traditional, paraenetic material with universally human rather than specifically Christian concerns” (C, 20; also 36 n. 106), he rejects their explanation that “a waning interest in an imminent parousia” was the decisive impulse in the Christian Haustafeln (C, 120).

The first serious attempt since the Dibelius-Weidinger research to explain the Christian Haustafeln as specifically Christian was by Karl Heinrich Rengstorf. He sees that the major impulse in the Haustafel formation was the early Christian interest in the οἶκος (“house”) and that the wife’s duty to be submissive was specifically Christian. However, the effort to establish the Haustafeln as a uniquely Christian creation has been championed by David Schroeder. His position represents a complete rejection of the thesis that the Christian Haustafeln are varied forms of a non-Christian schema.

Schroeder acknowledges some similarities in the works of Epictetus, Hierocles, Philo, and pseudo-Phocylides to the Christian household codes. For example, he says: 

“The schema is clearest in Epictetus and, in another form, in Hierocles.” And he quotes The Discourses ii.14 of Epictetus (A.D. 55-135), where the latter talks about “the work of the philosopher” which is chiefly making his will correspond to fate and adds:

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6 Ibid., 155 n. 8.
7 This argument will be discussed more fully in chapter 2 of this paper, because its criticism comprises the core of Yoder’s reading of the Haustafeln.
9 Ibid., 34. English translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.
that each person passes his life to himself, free from pain, fear, and perturbation, at the same time maintaining with his associates both the natural and the acquired relationships, those namely of son, father, brother, citizen, wife, neighbour, fellow-traveller, ruler, and subject.\footnote{Ibid. Schroeder quotes only the italicized part in Greek. For the English translation, I used Epictetus, \textit{The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual, and Fragments}, Vol. 1, trans. W. A. Oldfather (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1961), 307-309.}

All three relationships in the household codes are represented here. Schroeder also finds parallels in the first-century Hellenistic Judaism, especially in Philo’s \textit{The Decalogue} 165, which reads, “In the fifth commandment on honouring parents we have a suggestion of many necessary laws drawn up to deal with the relations of old to young, rulers to subjects, benefactors to benefited, slaves to masters.”\footnote{Philo, “The Decalogue” in Vol. 7, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958), 89.}

However, Schroeder sees no essential relationship between the Christian codes and Stoicism or Hellenistic Judaism. He argues that Paul created the Christian \textit{Haustafel}, and that the exhortations to the subordinate members were Jesus’ that had been handed to Paul. In other words, it is an ethical tradition going back to Jesus. He says, “According to 1 Thess. 4:2, this tradition goes back to Jesus.”\footnote{Schroeder, 18. 1 Thess. 4:2 reads, “For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.”} He adds, “Harald Riesenfeld takes that the evangelical tradition was a part of this tradition. It is correct, because it goes without saying that the kerygma as regards content must be filled with reference to the life and earthly works of Jesus. … Paul’s ethic is imbued with the ethic of the Lord.”\footnote{Ibid., 23.}

Concerning the \textit{Haustafel} in Colossians and Ephesians, Schroeder regards it as “a link in the train of thought of the letters.”\footnote{Ibid., 80.} If you take it out, you would not destroy the
chain, but you would lose a more essential element of the letters. The schema Schroeder finds in the Colossians-Ephesians Haustafel is threefold:

(1) First of all, the positions always come in pairs: husband and wife, parents and children, masters and slaves. Here in this construction, a clear principle of polarity prevails.
(2) On the other hand, we are to see that it is about the principle of subordination. In each pair, a member is subordinate to the other. It is about this subordination in each of the three pairs.
(3) Thirdly, it is to observe that those who are in the subordinate positions—wives, children, slaves—always are mentioned first. They stand in more emphatic places and are the actual matter of concern in the Haustafel.¹⁵

Schroeder finds the closest parallel to the NT Haustafel schema in Philo, especially in The Decalogue 167, because there he sees that the duties are mentioned in pairs, while not in Stoicism, and because Philo shows one member of the pair as subordinate to the other which is absent from Stoicism. Schroeder contends, “Here comes the Haustafel schema that is even clearer in appearance than in Stoicism, where we have observed no reciprocal exhortation nor any attention to the subordinate position.”¹⁶ His point is not accurate, because, as we shall see later, reciprocal exhortation in pairs is found in Seneca (Hecaton); and if you look further, subordinate members are directly addressed in Platonists and Neo-Pythagoreans, and they are addressed first in Dionysius.

2. James E. Crouch’s Historical Search

James Crouch agrees with Schroeder on two points: (1) that the form of the Stoic schema is different from that of the Haustafel in that the former lists the various

¹⁵ Ibid., 80-81.
¹⁶ Ibid., 69.
relationships in which an individual exists, while the latter is concerned with a number of persons in their relationship to each other; and (2) that the obvious emphasis on the duties of the subordinate members must be taken into consideration in any adequate explanation of the Christian Haustafel. He also accepts Schroeder’s argument to a certain degree that the Haustafeln “were formed because of the danger that the gospel would be misused as an excuse for social revolution” springing from the misunderstanding of statements such as Gal. 3:28 (104).17

However, Crouch finds Schroeder’s entire approach to the subject “so unsatisfactory that any contribution which he might have made is for all practical purposes negated” (28).18 It is especially problematic that Schroeder claims the Haustafeln to be a uniquely Christian creation and does not see any connection between them and Stoicism or Hellenistic Judaism, because to him the influence of both is unmistakable. Probably Crouch’s main criticism of Schroeder is directed at his selectivity that “permits him to eliminate those features from the Haustafeln which are embarrassing for his thesis” (30), and that makes the outcome of his reconstruction of the original Christian Haustafel, which he assumes was authored by Paul, “a theological construction” rather than a historical and literary reality (31).

Thus, Crouch launches his study starting with an evaluation of the preceding ones: “Historical study of the Christian Haustafeln is at an impasse” (32). His declared position

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17 In this section, the reference will be given only with page numbers from Crouch’s book.
18 Crouch has grievances even with the above points. First, he finds them nothing more than mere “expansions of Juncker’s criticisms some forty years earlier” (C, 29). Second, he regards Schroeder’s methodology weak because of the limited use of material (ibid., n. 76).
in his approach, therefore, is one of an interpreter who fully appreciates “the historically conditioned nature of his material” by having “courage to permit his material to be what it wishes” (156), even when its content “offends modern sensitivities” (31). He aims to have “an objective approach to the Haustafel in its historical context” and at the same time to give “the existential response to the demands of the Haustafel in the present” (156). Even though he seeks a balanced position between the historical and the theological viewpoints, one cannot help but detect a stronger emphasis on the historical side, probably because he mainly counteracts with Schroeder.

To make his conclusions clear at the outset, after an extensive research, Crouch finds “no exact parallel to the Colossian Haustafel outside the New Testament” (146). He admits “a significant though indirect role” of the Stoic καθήκον schema19 in the formation of the Haustafel (148), and in terms of the form he attributes a greater role to the Oriental-Jewish background than to Stoic influence. Concerning the material from which the Haustafel is comprised, he regards it “clearly Hellenistic Jewish” (146). The Colossian code, that he focuses on, is “the oldest extant Christian Haustafel” (32), but “In all probability, the Haustafel did exist prior to Colossians” (35). It is the contention of this paper following Crouch and Balch that there had been a pre-existing formula in the Greco-Roman society that the NT writers used in their household codes, but on the other hand following Schroeder and Yoder it contends that the schema was thoroughly christianized by teachings and example of Jesus in them.

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19 See 50ff.
The following two early Christian texts that he mentions (13; 113 n. 82) are almost identical to each other and have strikingly similar instructions to parents, masters, and slaves to those in the Colossian *Haustafel*. Didache 4:9-11 reads,

Do not remove your hand from \[Or: Do not refrain from disciplining; or: Do not shirk your responsibility towards\] your son or daughter, but from their youth teach them the reverential fear of God. Do not give orders to your male slave or female servant — who hope in the same God — out of bitterness, lest they stop fearing the God who is over you both. For he does not come to call those of high status, but those whom the Spirit has prepared. And you who are slaves must be subject to your masters as to a replica of God, with respect and reverential fear. \(^{20}\)

Compare it to Epistle of Barnabas 19:5 and 7:

Do not remove your hand from \[Or: refrain from disciplining; or: shirk your responsibility towards\] your son or daughter, but from their youth teach them the reverential fear of God. … Be subject to your masters as to a replica of God, with respect and reverential fear. Do not give orders to your male slave or female servant out of bitterness — since they hope in the same God — lest they stop fearing the God who is over you both. For he did not come to call those of high status but those whom the Spirit had prepared. \(^{21}\)

These texts, along with the *Haustafeln* in the New Testament and with 1 Clement 1:3, 21:6-9, 38:2, Ignatius’ letter to Polycarp 4:1-6:1, and Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians 4:1-6:3, form the ground on which Crouch concludes that “we have examples of a paraenetic schema which was adaptable to a variety of situations and available to a number of early Christian moral teachers” (13).

(A) The Unwritten Laws of the Greek Ethic


Crouch’s search for “a schema which preceded the Colossian letter” (10) brings him back to the unwritten laws of the Greek ethic. The unwritten laws (ἄγραφα νόμιμα) refer to “a loosely connected body of ethical duties which remained basically uncatalogued” (45) and they were “a part of the common Greek heritage” (46). Crouch’s primary interest is in the way that the Greek unwritten laws found their way into the Stoic list of duties.²² He acknowledges Adolf Dyroff’s work that related the two in 1897, which is earlier than Weidinger’s observation in that area. Pseudo-Isocrates’ speech Πρῶς Δημόνικον which reflects the popular ethic of the fourth century B.C., especially section 16, shows a list of duties that is strikingly similar to the Stoic καθήκοντα, which we will examine later: “… τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς φοβοῦ, τοὺς δὲ γονεῖς τίμα, τοὺς δὲ φίλους αἰσχύνοι, τοῖς δὲ νόμοις πείθου …” (37). It exhorts to fear gods, honor your parents, be modest with your friends, and obey the laws. Crouch proposes that section 16 is the author’s summary of the unwritten laws that had earned prominence in the Greek ethic for a century and a half already.

Using Rudolf Hirzel’s study of the unwritten laws in 1900, “Ἀγραφὸς νόμος,” Crouch explains that the unwritten laws had their origin in the ancestral customs of Greece. These laws that developed out of the traditional family customs became prominent during the fifth century B.C. Dissatisfied with the written laws of that time, particularly with their temporary and contradictory nature, people in more conservative circles and the nobility tended to emphasize the “enduring standards of human conduct”

²² Even after his extensive research in this area, Crouch is not as much convinced of the extent of the Greek ethic’s influence on the formation of the Christian Haustafeln as Balch is.
that they received from their ancestors (39). As an evidence of the existence of the
schema this early on, Crouch presents Aeschylus’ *Suppliants*, a tragedy presented around
470 B.C., in which he finds “one of the earliest attempts to summarize the unwritten laws”
(39).

And let them grant fair terms to strangers,
not arm Ares for battle:
do justice, not harm!
Gods dwell here and keep this land:
worship them in the ancestral way,
cutting the laurel and
slaughtering cattle
as your fathers ordained. For Justice
has made honoring parents
her third commandment.23

Exhortations to practice hospitality toward strangers, honor the gods, and respect the
parents, despite the varied order, clearly reflect the unwritten laws found in *Πρὸς
Δημόνικον*.

Duties toward gods and parents were common in the Greek popular ethic, as also
seen in a fragment of Euripides in Stobaeus’ *Anthologium* iii. 1. 80. It includes three
virtues of honoring the gods, parents, and the common laws of Greece (40). Another duty
that belonged to these common laws was the proper care of the dead. It is the theme of
*Antigone* by Sophocles written before or in 442 B.C. When interrogated by Kreon why
she “dared to overstep the law” that prohibited anybody from burying Polyneices, she
replies:

The quoted section is 696-705. Crouch indicates that the section is 701-709. It is one of several places
where Crouch’s book or stanza references are flawed.
It was not Zeus who made that proclamation to me; nor was it Justice, who resides in the same house with the gods below the earth, who put in place for men such laws as yours. Nor did I think your proclamation so strong that you, a mortal, could overrule the laws of the gods, that are unwritten and unfailing. For these laws live not now or yesterday but always, and no one knows how long ago they appeared. … But if I let the son of my own mother lie dead and unburied, that would give me pain.  

In this play, the duty toward the dead is not just a common law but one of the laws “of the gods, that are *unwritten* and unfailing” and that live “always.” Here we see the tension between temporary, contradictory written laws of men and unwritten, enduring laws of the ancestors sanctioned by gods.

Crouch finds Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* significant in that it uses the designation “unwritten laws (ἄγραφοι νόμοι)” in conjunction with their summary. In *Memorabilia* iv. 4.18ff., Socrates asks Hippias whether he knows what is meant by “unwritten laws.” Hippias answers, “Yes, those that are uniformly observed in every country.” And he adds that he supposes that “the gods made these laws for men.” Even though Crouch mentions Plato and Aristotle, he does not give as much weight on their importance in regards to the unwritten laws and the *Hautafeln* as Balch does. He makes note of *Laws* viii. 838 a and b, where the Athenian Stranger talks with Megillus about the “shameful” “sexual commerce” of some people: “So too in the case of a son or daughter, the same *unwritten law* (νόμος ἄγραφος) is most effective in guarding men from sleeping with them, either

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openly or secretly.”²⁶ Here, the shameful nature of the sexual relationship with one’s children or brother or sister is clearly connected with its prohibition as an unwritten law.

To Crouch, Plato and Aristotle represent the philosophers whose ethical works are “scientific” and have little to do with “ethics on the popular level” (43), but still he finds references to the ἄγραφα in their works, which show the prevalence of the schema in their time. Besides viii. 838, there is one more passage in Plato’s Laws that reveals the philosopher’s familiarity with the term “unwritten law.” In Book vii. 793a, the Athenian Stranger tells Clinias in a conversation on raising children: “all the regulations which we are now expounding are what are commonly termed ‘unwritten laws.’ And these as a whole are just the same as what men call ‘ancestral customs.’”²⁷

Two more examples of the influence of the schema are found in Plato’s Republic. First in iv. 425b: in his conversation with Adeimantus, Socrates refers to the unwritten laws as “those customs and rules that were deemed trivial and abolished by the previous rulers.” When asked by Adeimantus what they are, Socrates answers, “Things like the young observing a respectful silence in the presence of their elders; rising when older persons enter and making place for them; honoring their parents; comeliness in dress and deportment.”²⁸ Even though it does not show a three- or fourfold summary of the ἄγραφα as other works did, the influence of the tradition is obvious, particularly in reference to honoring one’s parents. The other example is found in iv. 427b: Socrates refers to them

²⁷ Ibid., 19.
as “our basic and most important and precious laws,” and continues in iv. 427c that these laws are from the ancestral god and that they pertain to all human beings.

These are matters that we human beings cannot fully comprehend. Thus, if we are wise, we will not permit any man to claim he can manage or legislate for them. Instead, we must turn to the ancestral god for instruction, to the ancestral god of all human beings who sits at the center and navel of the earth and from there helps us understand.\(^9\)

What Crouch finds most significant is that books on rhetoric have the unwritten laws in them, because unless the content of those laws had not been common knowledge and unless the public speakers had not made frequent use of them, they would not have been included in such works. Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* mentions the ἄγραφα in i. 14.5-7 (1375a): “Further, the worse deed is that which involves the doer in special shame; that whereby a man wrongs his benefactors – for he does more than one wrong, by not merely doing them harm but failing to do them good; that which breaks the *unwritten laws of justice.*”\(^{30}\) Aristotle makes frequent use of the term ἄγραφα. For example, he mentions it in *Nicomachean Ethics* viii. 13 (1162b 21-23): “There are two ways of being just, one unwritten, and one governed by rules of law.” Also in the section on moral education, he refers to “unwritten” laws in x. 9 (1180b 2).\(^{31}\)

As a summary of the unwritten laws, Crouch provides the following: “One should revere gods, honor his parents, return the good deeds of benefactors, be helpful towards friends, show zeal for the fatherland, bury the dead, practice hospitality … and avoid

\(^{29}\) Ibid.


incest” (45). In works, they were usually presented in a threefold form: duties toward gods and parents being more or less fixed as the first and second, and in the third, either a summary of all the rest or one of them which received a special emphasis in the context. Crouch understands that the Stoics gave a scientific basis to this common body of ethical material.

(B) List of Duties in Stoicism

Tracing the development of the schema within Stoicism is not easy because of the fact that no complete work by any Stoic philosopher survives from the phases of Early and Middle Stoicism. Crouch depends solely on secondary sources. After his study, he detects characteristics of Stoicism that were quite incompatible with the unwritten laws. After all, the ἄγραφα were “a foreign element” within Stoicism (52). However, he concludes that καθήκοντα that included the elements of the schema of the ἄγραφα existed in Stoicism from the very beginning (52-53). He maintains that it is most likely that Zeno, the founder of Early Stoicism that lasted roughly from late 4th to late 2nd centuries B.C., “incorporated the ἄγραφα into his system under the designation καθήκοντα” (56). What are καθήκοντα? And on what ground does Crouch conclude that Stoicism included the elements of the schema from the beginning?

To the Stoics, all the ethical deeds are divided into three kinds: perfect deed (κατόρθωμα), an action which is performed in agreement with perfect reason; sin (ἁμάρτημα); and “middle (μέσα-)” actions. The Stoics called these middle actions καθήκοντα, actions that either are absolutely indifferent or have a relative value (51).
According to Diogenes Laertius, “Zeno was the first to use this term καθήκον” in his description of an ethical deed.32 Despite the fact that there is a wide divergence of meaning that the Stoics give to this term, Crouch translates it as “duty” or “befitting action” (51). He finds it quite clear “that καθήκον designates that area of Stoic ethics in which dogma is tempered by reality and concessions are made to common sense” (51-52). As Eduard Schwartz says, “Here is a side door to the rigorists, which makes it possible for them to stand in real life.”33

In response to the attacks from the outsiders, presumably on the unrealistic and harsh features of Stoicism, they made these concessions, starting from Zeno himself (51), adapting their system to the Roman mentality and coming to terms with the world. Focusing on “the contradictions inherent in the Stoic system” (50), Crouch supports the following view as an explanation, while specifically talking about Middle Stoicism.

Much has been made of the casuistry of Middle Stoicism, and a good case can be made for the view that the popular ethical standards of the ἄγραφα were introduced to the Stoic system in an effort to tone down the more radical elements of Stoic dogma in favor of an approach which would appeal to the Roman mentality and make Stoicism more capable of responding to its critics. (49)

Max Wundt’s observation is very informative in this regard. He “traces the contradictions in the Stoic ethical system back to one basic contradiction, viz., that the Stoics begin with a denial of real life and then end up by affirming it” (50 n. 27). Balch also makes a case about the lack of consistency between “Stoic practice” and “Stoic theory” (B, 143, 146).

As the first example of the ἄγραφα schema in a work that can claim direct Stoic influence, Crouch presents On Duties that Cicero wrote in 44 B.C. Cicero used a treatise by the Stoic Panaetius of Rhodes, Περὶ Καθήκοντα. On Duties i. 58 reads:

Now were there a comparison, or competition, as to who ought most to receive our dutiful services, our country and our parents would be foremost; for we are obliged to them for the greatest kindnesses. Next would be our children and our whole household, which looks to us alone and can have no other refuge. Then our relations, who are congenial to us and with whom even our fortunes are generally shared.³⁴

It is interesting to see how this work which heavily relies on a Stoic treatise has similar elements of the ἄγραφα tradition in it: obligations to country, to parents, to children, and to the entire family and relatives. Crouch maintains that here in this section of On Duties, “we are dealing with a traditional schema” and that “this schema was commonly identified with the Stoic καθήκοντα” (C, 48).

Diogenes Laertius’ statement in vii. 108 reflects the similar list of duties, acts which are dictated by reason: “honouring one’s parents, brothers and country, and intercourse with friends.”³⁵ Crouch sees here “a clear example of a list of καθήκοντα patterned after ἄγραφα νόμιμα” (53). He, then, examines three “witnesses” to these duties’ existence in the period of Middle Stoicism: Polybius, Lucilius, and Hecaton. Especially, the influence of Hecaton of Rhodes of Middle Stoicism on Cicero and Seneca is apparent, even though none of his works remains. In On Duties iii. 63, Cicero quotes from Hecaton’s lost work which had the same title:

³⁴ Cicero, On Duties, 24.
³⁵ Diogenes Laertius, vii. 108.
I see that Hecaton of Rhodes, Panaetius’ pupil, said in the books about duty that he wrote for Quintus Tubero, that a wise man would, without acting contrary to customs, laws, and established practices, take account of his personal wealth. For we do not wish to be rich for our own sake alone, but for our children, our friends, and most of all for the political community.\textsuperscript{36}

Hecaton was also Seneca (4 B.C. – 65 A.D.)’s major source, if not the sole one (55). A good example is found in Seneca’s \textit{On Benefits} ii. 18:

> Every obligation that involves two people makes an equal demand upon both. When you have considered the sort of person a father ought to be, you will find that there remains the not less great task of discovering the sort that a son should be; it is true that a husband has certain duties, yet those of the wife are not less great. In the exchange of obligations each in turn renders to the other the service that he requires, and they desire that the same rule of action should apply to both, but this rule, as Hecaton says, is a difficult matter.\textsuperscript{37}

The extraordinary element that we find here is the reciprocity in duties. Father and son, husband and wife, each in the pair has his/her obligations to the other, none of which any greater than the other’s. Seneca’s quotations from Hecaton are very important to the current study, also because we see the pairs that we find in the Christian \textit{Haustafeln} in them.

Look at \textit{On Benefits} iii. 18. 1: “And yet some raise the question, for example Hecaton, whether it is possible for a slave to give a benefit to his master.”\textsuperscript{38} Hecaton distinguishes some acts as benefits, some as duties, some as services, doubting that a slave can give a benefit to his master, because “a benefit is something that is given by a


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 159.
stranger,” which is different from a duty performed by persons in ties of kinship and from a service that one’s position imposes on one. Seneca disagrees with him: he says, “It is possible for a slave to be just, it is possible for him to be brave, it is possible for him to be magnanimous; therefore it is possible also for him to give a benefit” (iii. 18. 4). It is because “not the status, but the intention, of the one who bestows is what counts” (iii. 18. 2). Cicero and Seneca’s references to Hecaton are a clear indication that Hecaton used the schema in his system.

Crouch therefore sees a striking similarity between the Stoic list of duties and the ἄγραφα νόμιμα, and as attested before, affirms the view that it was Zeno who incorporated the schema into his system of καθήκοντα (56). He also detects some change within Stoicism: in Early Stoicism, gods and parents retained the major role, while in Middle Stoicism, one’s primary duty was moved from gods to the state, along with more concentration on human relationships, such as family and kinship.

Concerning Late Stoicism of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., Crouch notes how different the Stoic list of duties during this period is from that of the earlier times. He characterizes this period as that “of eclecticism and popularization” (57). Rather than displaying any original spirit in philosophy, many Cynic who were wandering Stoic morality preachers popularized it through the popular diatribe. As “one of the earliest examples of the use of the Stoic καθήκον schema in the popular philosophy of the Roman

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39 Ibid., 159-61.
40 Ibid., 161.
period” (59), Crouch introduces *The Art of Poetry* by Horace, the Roman poet of the latter half of the 1st century B.C.

Arguing that the philosophical education is the prerequisite for a poet, Horace observes in 309-316:

> Of good writing the source and fount is wisdom. Your matter the Socratic pages can set forth, and when matter is in hand words will not be loath to follow. He who has learned what he owes his country and his friends, what love is due a parent, a brother, and a guest, … he surely knows how to give each character his fitting part.41

Finding the source of wisdom in the school of Socrates, as aforementioned passages in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* did, and including the duties toward one’s country, parents, brothers, guests, and friends, it reflects the influence of the Stoic καθήκοντα which in turn have been influenced by the older ἀγραφά νόμιμα. I am diverging from Crouch at this point. While he focuses on distinctions between the older ἀγραφά and the Stoic καθήκοντα, in the end denying both of them as an essential influence on the Christian *Haustafeln*, I see more of a continuation of both traditions in the formation of the Christian household codes, which will be discussed more extensively later (See pp. 238-55).

As pointed out earlier, Crouch notices in Early Stoicism the retention of the pattern of the ἀγραφά, with a leading role played by duties to gods and parents. The Stoic καθήκοντα, started by Zeno early on, came to be based on one’s duty to the state in Middle Stoicism. The new phenomenon in the schema in Late Stoicism of the Roman

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Empire is the heightened interest in the household. Seneca’s *On Benefits* ii. 18, quoted before, is a good example, even though Crouch is not sure whether this originated from Seneca himself or from Hecaton whom he quotes. What is clear to him is that this interest in the household reflects the shift of attention on the part of the popular philosophers “from a systematic treatment of duties to the more practical concern of the common man” (60).

Another work of Seneca that reflects the Stoic καθήκον schema is *Epistles*. In section 94 “On the Value of Advice,” he mentions a controversy within Stoicism between those who valued only “That department of philosophy which supplies precepts appropriate to the individual case” and those who denied it, preferring “the actual dogmas of philosophy” and “the definition of the Supreme Good.”42 According to Seneca, Ariston the Stoic was a strong spokesperson of the latter camp, who believed “the above-mentioned department to be of slight import.”43 “The above-mentioned department” is nothing other than καθήκοντα which deal with those household relationships, such as “how a husband should conduct himself towards his wife, or how a father should bring up his children, or how a master should rule his slaves.”44

Even though these items are mentioned in a setting where Ariston denies their adequacy for the Stoic philosophy, calling them “nothing but old wives’ precepts,”45 it is quite impossible to miss the striking similarity this list shows to the concerns in the

43 Ibid., 11.
44 Ibid.
Christian *Haustafeln*. Exactly the three pairs – husband/wife, father/children, master/slaves – are presented in the same order that they appear in the household codes, which shows the schema’s continued existence and influence. Crouch himself admits that “for the first time we have before us a schema which is limited to the relationships within the household” (60).

There were Stoics in the Roman Empire who were inclined to the popularization of philosophy and whose works on duties are based on the schema. C. Musonius Rufus, Dio Chrysostomus, Epictetus, Hierocles and Emperor Marcus Antonius are the examples. As Schroeder found Epictetus important due to similarities between his works and the *Haustafeln*, Crouch also quotes Epictetus extensively as “the classic example of the uses of the Stoic καθήκον schema in the diatribes of the popular philosophy of the Roman period” (63). In *Discourses* iii. 7. 25, Epictetus talks about duties (“καθήκοντα”) and in the next verse he enumerates the following as “the principal things” in life: “The duties of citizenship, marriage, begetting children, reverence to God, care of parents.”

The interest here, in fact, is in the individual, which is typically Stoic. Crouch clarifies it by saying that for Epictetus, duty means “the maintaining of one’s relationships as a pious man, as son, as brother, as father and as citizen” (64). Rather than reflecting concerns for others, it shows a desire to live correctly in relationships one lives in according to one’s nature. Epictetus writes in *Encheiridion* section 30, for example, that “moral purpose” for Stoics “is to be in harmony with nature.”

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47 Ibid., 511. These points are close to Yoder’s understanding of Stoicism.
A similar passage is found in *Discourses* iii. 21. 5, in which Epictetus says that you show that you have learned “something of the philosophers” when you do these: “marry, get children, be active as a citizen; endure revilings, bear with an unreasonable brother, father, son, neighbour, fellow-traveller.” Another passage in *Discourse* ii. 23. 38 shows great similarity to the schema: “your purpose is … to return to your country, to relieve the fear of your kinsmen, to do the duties of a citizen yourself, to marry, bring up children, hold the customary offices.” The passage in ii. 14. 8 quoted earlier by Schroeder (See pp. 28-29) talks about a person “maintaining with his associates both the natural and the acquired relationships, those namely of son, father, brother, citizen, wife, neighbour, fellow-traveller, ruler, and subject.”

Crouch finds Epictetus teaching for the common men, not for the intellectual aristocrats as the Early Stoics did, and showing in his usage of the καθήκον schema a slight variation from the emphasis traditionally given by Stoics on the individual who has the capacity to perform all duties. As Crouch attests, even though Epictetus still shows the Stoic tendency to focus on the individual, “The object of consideration is no longer the Stoic wise man in his ‘splendid isolation’” (67). Without a set pattern or order, the form and style of the schema are adapted to varying situations of the common men, as the popular philosophers did in their diatribes. While the use of the Stoic καθήκον schema is apparent in the list of duties, we do not see any indication in Epictetus to the reciprocity that we find in the *Haußafeln*.

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48 Ibid., 125.
Another Stoic, Hierocles, who was a contemporary of Epictetus, is presented by Crouch as one who “gives us our best view of the role played by the καθήκοντα in the popularly oriented Stoic philosophy of the Roman Empire” (67). Using K. Praechter’s study on the excerpts attributed to Hierocles by Stobaeus, he gives us an overview of Hierocles’ work. Gods are at the head of the list as in Early Stoicism, but Hierocles is not interested in duties toward the gods. The country is like a “second God” (68) and one is to work for the good of one’s country. One should beget children not only in consideration of the parents, friends, and relatives, but for the sake of the country.

Further, we should honor parents as “earthly gods” (68). Maintaining a good relationship between brothers is highly exhorted. One also has duties to one’s relatives. The individual stands in the center of a circle; immediately around it stand parents, brothers, wife and children; and outside that middle circle there is the outer one in which we find uncles, aunts, grandparents, children of brothers and cousins. Marriage to him is the highest fellowship that one can have, and also it is necessary for the wellbeing of the state.

Crouch is convinced with Praechter that the content of these fragments of Hierocles’ work is “identical with the common body of ethical instructions which circulated in the Imperial period under the name of Stoicism” and that it has “the most material in common with those representatives of the popular philosophy who also made use of the Stoic list of duties: Musonius, Epictetus, Dio and Philo” (69). Like Epictetus, Hierocles is more interested in the common man than in the upper class, and the center of his interest is in one’s private life within one’s circle of family and friends.
Pseudo-Plutarch’s *The Education of Children* also is the product of the popular philosophy of the Roman Empire. Dealing with the education of the young, this work tells us that philosophy teaches “that one ought to reverence the gods, to honour one’s parents, to respect one’s elders, to be obedient to the laws, to yield to those in authority, to love one’s friends, *to be chaste with women, to be affectionate with children, and not to be overbearing with slaves.*”\(^{50}\) What interests one is the final three items: women, children, and slaves. Crouch notes that section 94 of Seneca’s *Epistles* so far has been the only work that shows a clear reference to slaves’ treatment in an example of the schema. Now he presents these two works as the ones which list women, children, and slaves in the same order as in the *Haustafeln.*\(^{51}\)

The influence of the Stoic καθήκον schema is also found in Emperor Marcus Antonius’s *Meditations* i. 17. Starting from gods, he lists persons he is indebted to in life: “From the Gods, to have good grandfathers, good parents, a good sister, good teachers, good companions, kinsmen, friends – nearly all of them; and that I fell into no trespass against any of them ….”\(^{52}\) He is grateful to gods that they have given him these relationships and that he has been able to fulfill his duty in each of them: to his father, brother, children, mother, and wife.

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\(^{51}\) Balch adds that Seneca, Ariston, and Hecaton refer to a form exactly outlined by Aristotle with these three pairs. See p. 69.

As characteristics of the Stoic list of duties in the popular philosophy of the Roman Empire, Crouch points out its lack of uniformity and a tendency to treat the members of the family as a unit. Even though it is not an established formula, that tendency is clear in the works of Musonius, Hierocles, Seneca/Hecaton, and Epictetus, which give special attention to the household and to marriage. He also notes a further loosening of the Stoic practice of addressing the individual as the wise man in that we find a kind of reciprocity in Hecaton and in that we find the reference to the slaves included in the list of duties. We have seen women, children, and slaves listed together in that order both in Seneca, Epistles section 94. 1 and in Pseudo-Plutarch, The Education of Children 7E. While reluctant to make any conclusion about the relationship between the schema and the Christian Haustafel, because the focus in the former is still on the individual, Crouch sees that it is clear that “a list of duties referring to husbands and wives, fathers and children, masters and slaves is conceivable within the context of the popularized Stoicism of the Roman Empire” (73).

(C) List of Duties in Hellenistic Judaism

Crouch now moves on to Hellenistic Judaism, looking for clues to the NT Haustafel in the lists of social duties in it. Hellenistic Judaism in its uniqueness still shows the influence of Hellenism in terms of the continued schema. Sirach 7:18-36 is one of the earliest Jewish codes together with Tobit (113). The first half (vv. 18-28) talks about duties toward those who compose one’s inner circle: friend, brother, wife, slaves, hired hands, children, and parents. For example, vv. 27-28 read, “With all your heart
honor your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that it was of your parents you were born; how can you repay what they have given to you?”53

The latter half (vv. 29-36) deals with one’s religious and social duties: toward God, priests, the poor, the dead, the mourners, and the sick. The content, especially of the second section, is basically Jewish. The form also is different from that of the Stoic schema. But Crouch sees in Sirach “an example of a Jewish list of duties which roughly parallel those we have observed in our Hellenistic sources” (74-75).

Another example of the tendency of maxims being formed into a code that deals with various relationships one has is Tobit 4:3-19. Clearly set apart from its immediate context, this paraenetic unit consists of Tobit’s instructions to his son, Tobias: give your father a proper burial, honor your mother, revere the Lord, give alms to the poor and righteous, marry a Jewish woman, and give wages to your hired hands on that day.

Pseudo-Phocylides’ sentences also show a similar list of duties: “First of all honor God, and thereafter your parents” (v. 8); “To outdo one’s benefactors with further benefactions is fitting” (v. 80); “Love your wife: for what is sweeter and better than when a wife is lovingly disposed to her husband into old age and husband to wife, and strife does not split them asunder?” (vv. 195-97); “Be not severe with your children, but be gentle” (v. 207); and “Apportion to a slave what is prescribed, so that he will be to your liking …” (v. 224).54


One of the authors that Weidinger, Schroeder, Crouch, and Balch all find intriguing in terms of the similarity between their works and the NT Haustafeln is Philo (20 B.C. – 50 A.D.), who was a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher born in Alexandria. His works show that he is well acquainted with the Stoic term καθήκον and frequently uses the list of duties that are related to it.55 The Posterity and Exile of Cain displays one such source. While Onan’s behavior in Gen. 38:9, not fulfilling a brother’s duty for his dead brother with Tamar, is not directly related to the duties listed below, Philo accuses him of destroying “the best things in the world.”

“Will you not” – so I would say to him – “by providing only your individual profit, be doing away with all the best things in the world, unless you are to get some advantage from them, honour paid to parents, loving care of a wife, bringing up of children, happy and blameless relations with domestic servants, management of a house, leadership in a city, maintaining of laws, guardianship of usages, reverence towards elders, respect for the memory of the departed, fellowship with the living, piety in words and actions towards the Deity?”

These items are foreign to the context and are to be viewed as a unit (77).

Following Schroeder, Crouch gives a special attention to the importance of Philo’s The Decalogue 165-167 (See p. 29) in terms of its relation to the NT Haustafeln. It merits Crouch’s recognition that “Schroeder is correct in his evaluation of this text as one of our more significant sources,” since we have “for the first time a summary of mutual relationships in which the duties of each party are listed” (79). The young are instructed to show courtesy to the old; the old to take care of the young; subjects to obey

55 For example, “Allegorical Interpretation” i. 56 and iii. 210; “On the Cherubim” 14-15; “On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain” 43; and “On Noah’s Work as a Planter” 94, 100, 146.
their rulers; rulers to promote the welfare of their subjects; recipients of benefits to requite them with gratitude; benefactors not to seek repayment; servants to render an affectionate loyalty to their masters; and masters to show their slaves the gentleness and kindness “by which inequality is equalized.”\(^{57}\)

However, Crouch rejects both Schroeder’s denial of the Stoic influence in this passage and his claim that in the formation of the NT Haustafel, the Decalogue played a major role. He finds the content of the codes in The Decalogue 165ff. to be clearly Stoic and their relationship to the Decalogue only artificial. And yet, due to the reciprocity and concern for the duties of the inferior positions that these codes demonstrate, he sees their closer similarity in form to the Colossian Haustafel than to the Stoic καθήκον schema.

Philo’s De Hypothetica also exhibits various uses of the Stoic schema. 7.2 reads, “so too with impiety not only of act but even of a casual word and not only against God Himself … but also against a father or mother or benefactor of your own the penalty is the same, death.”\(^{58}\) The list of God, father, mother, and benefactor clearly forms a unit, because you find no death penalty prescribed anywhere in the OT or in rabbinic literature for speaking against one’s benefactor (81). 7.14 is counted by Crouch as one of the most important texts for his study: “The husband seems competent to transmit knowledge of the laws to his wife, the father to his children, the master to his slaves.”\(^{59}\) No reference is made to the duties of the wife, children, and slaves, and it talks about the same duty – that of transmitting knowledge of the laws – of the husband, father, and master, basically the

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 89.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 433.
same person, the male head of the household. And yet, “its pattern is unmistakable: husband-wife, father-children, master-servants,” and it “bears a striking resemblance to the Colossian Haustafel” (82).

Crouch sees a consistent pattern in the common ethical material, found in the Hellenistic Jewish works, which may not be traced back to the Old Testament. Philo’s and Josephus’ discussions of the family relations are highly reminiscent of elements in the NT Haustafeln. Philo, *De Hypothetica* 7.3 reads, “wives must be in servitude to their husbands, a servitude not imposed by violent ill-treatment but promoting obedience in all things.”

Josephus has a parallel passage in his *Against Apion* ii. 201, in which he says, “The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority has been given by God to the man.” The subjection of the woman to her husband is emphasized in both authors. Furthermore, as Philo’s “not imposed by violent ill-treatment” and Josephus’ “not for her humiliation” indicate, both leave some reservation in the husband’s treatment of her.

Immediately after this pair of husband-wife, Philo adds a statement concerning parents and children, another parallel to the NT codes: “Parents must have power over their children to keep them safe and tend them carefully.”

Starting with the admonition not to be severe with your children but to be gentle, Pseudo-Phocylides talks about what

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60 Ibid., 425.
62 Philo, Vol. 9, 425.
you need to do when a child sins (vv. 207-209). Both Ps. Phocylides (v. 8) and Josephus connect children’s duty to honor their parents with honor toward God, which has been observed in the Greek unwritten laws. Against Apion 206 reads: “Honour to parents the Law ranks second only to honour to God, and if a son does not respond to the benefits received from them – for the slightest failure in his duty towards them – it hands him over to be stoned.”

This severity of punishment that exceeds the requirements of the Jewish Law is demonstrated by Josephus and Philo, which according to Crouch, further “indicate[s] that they draw from a source other than the Old Testament” (87). Common references in Philo, Josephus, and Ps. Phocylides to a proper burial of the dead, the duty toward benefactors, the precept not to reveal the secrets of a former friend after the estrangement and the like, become the ground on which Crouch declares the Greek origin of their works. This mixture of the Jewish and Hellenistic materials in their texts leads him to explore a source which existed prior to them and “from which each drew for his own particular purpose” (88).

The conclusion that he gets at is that this common “source” was “an orally transmitted body of material with which Jewish propagandists pleaded the cause of ethical monotheism” (98). This Jewish missionary activity was at its peak in the Roman period, with the purpose of proclaiming one God and the universal, ethical standards of that God. Because the code of ethics for non-Jews was regarded “valid for the entire

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63 Wilson, 200.
human race” (96), the Jewish propagandists freely borrowed from the Hellenistic tradition, which was also regarded as having universal validity. Thus it is Crouch’s contention that the laws and regulations for non-Jews and the Greek unwritten laws had been mixed together by the Jewish propagandists. A significant element that was taken over into this common material is “the Hellenistic practice of listing social duties in the form of a code” (98), and Philo, Josephus, and Ps. Phocylides drew from this material. Crouch maintains,

As the Jewish propaganda developed, however, it came increasingly under the influence of the Hellenistic νόμων ἀγράφων, especially in the form in which they were preserved and passed on in Stoicism. A number of the codes we have found in Hellenistic Jewish works bear all the marks of a typically Stoic list of καθήκοντα. (98)

He adds that we find the greatest similarity to the NT Haustafeln in the Jewish propagandists’ formulations of the Stoic list of duties.

Turning to the Colossian Haustafel for a closer examination, Crouch attempts to trace the source of its form, especially focusing on its reciprocity. He contends that the Hellenistic Judaism received the principle of reciprocity from the Oriental background – that of Israel and Egypt – within Judaism (102). Crouch then turns to the order in which the groups are mentioned in the Haustafel. Ernst Lohmeyer’s study is helpful here. He finds the unit of women, children, and slaves in Jewish sources as groups of people who were religiously inferior. They were often mentioned together, because they did not share the rights and responsibilities of the male, adult, free members of the society.

Berakoth 3:3 reads, “Women, and slaves, and minors are exempt from the recitation of the Shema, and from the obligation of wearing phylacteries, but are
obligated to recite the prayer, and are obligated to post the Mezuzah, and to recite Grace after meals.”  

Berakoth 7:2 also says, “Women, slaves, or minors may not be counted for extending the invitation to recite the blessings over the meal.” While significant in their demonstration of the Jewish interest in these groups which must have been carried over to Hellenistic Judaism, the problem of these examples is that these groups of people are released from certain cultic duties, rather than being given social duties toward their husbands, masters, and fathers, as the Haustafel pattern shows.

Crouch acknowledges the existence of non-Jewish sources that have the grouping of women-children-slaves in Aristotle’s Politics, Artemidorus Daldianus i. 24, and Seneca’s Epistles 94, but he dismisses them as rare occasions, compared to the Jewish concentration of the interest. It is contended against by Balch, in whose section some of these texts will be more thoroughly examined. Turning to the Jewish sources that are more convincing to him, Crouch lists two passages in Josephus. Jewish Antiquities 209 reads,

> When the multitude hath assembled in the holy city for the sacrifices, every seven years at the season of the feast of tabernacles, let the high priest, standing upon a raised platform from which he may be heard, recite the laws to the whole assembly; and let neither woman nor child be excluded from this audience, nay nor yet the slaves.

Jewish Antiquities 309 has the same line of instruction: “On the morrow, having called together the people, women and children included, to an assembly which even the slaves

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66 Yerushalmi Berakh 7:2 in ibid., 151.

were required to attend, he made them swear to observe the laws ....”68 In both passages, Josephus makes it clear that Israel’s assembly included women, children, and slaves.

The text that “offers the closest parallel to the pattern of the Colossian Haustafel,” Crouch argues, is Philo’s De Hypothetica 7. 14 which has been quoted earlier (See p. 53). The husband’s duty to teach the Law to his wife, the father’s to his children, and the master’s to his slaves, go beyond the OT instructions – Deut. 4:9; 11:19; 32:46, etc. that tell you to teach your children – and beyond rabbinic practice, which says women and girls are not permitted to study the Law (106). Crouch finds a greater similarity here to the Haustafel schema than in the Hellenistic or the rabbinic texts and asserts that the three-fold grouping of husband-wife, father-children, master-slaves must have been known and used in the Hellenistic Jewish apologetic.

Crouch concludes about the whole content of the Haustafel that “the most likely source of the material in the Haustafel was the propaganda of Hellenistic Judaism. The reciprocal treatment of social duties is of Oriental origin, and is not found in Stoicism” (119). While every instance of the Haustafel exhortations has its own parallel in the Hellenistic Jewish sources, the one instance – the exhortation toward wives – is where you cannot dispute the influence of the Hellenistic Jewish propaganda.

3. David Balch and the Influence of the Aristotelian Tradition

While his interest diverges from Crouch’s from time to time due to his focus on the Haustafel in 1 Peter, David Balch’s study is very helpful in understanding the New

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68 Ibid., 625. Emphasis added.
Testament *Haustafeln* in general.\(^{69}\) The main point that he makes is that the ultimate origin of the NT codes of household ethics is Greek philosophical thought based on Plato and Aristotle.\(^{70}\) He claims that “unnecessary confusion” has been caused by the neglect of their material (14), whose importance was already pointed out by Weidinger. Balch is prompted by Klaus Thraede, who suggests the Greek discussions of household management – Aristotle, Xenophon, pseudo-Aristotelian works, and Neopythagorean fragments – as an alternative source for the stress on the household duties that the *Haustafeln* have.

Despite their differing conclusions on the ultimate source of the codes, Balch’s argument reinforces Crouch’s that the NT *Haustafeln* reflect the wider society’s ethical thinking of the time. On the other hand, his emphasis on Christians’ apologetic use of subordination ethic within Roman society highlights in an ironical way the threat that their kingdom ethic posed on the hierarchical relations in the household and in the state.

(A) The Topoi “Concerning the Constitution” & “Concerning Household Management”

The essential element in Balch’s argument is the Aristotelian outline of the topos “concerning household management” and its relation to the NT *Haustafeln*. He finds Friedrich Wilhelm’s observation of the close, almost indistinguishable interrelationship among the three topoi – “concerning the constitution,”\(^ {71}\) “concerning household

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\(^{69}\) For example, his emphasis on the apologetic function of the NT household ethic, as opposed to its paraenetic (Dibelius-Weidinger) or missionary (Schroeder) use or its purpose of repressing social unrest (Schroeder, Crouch), is very much grounded on his focus on the 1 Peter passage.

\(^{70}\) David Balch, op. cit., 120. Quotations from this book will be indicated in parentheses in the text.

\(^{71}\) Balch defines “the constitution” as “the whole state” on p. 26.
management,” and “concerning marriage” – very important. That observation, together with the discovery of the fact that the second topos of the three is nearly identical with the *Haustafel*, enables Balch to see the continued concern and use of Aristotle’s outline by Middle Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics, Epicureans, Hellenistic Jews, and Neopythagoreans.

Balch’s investigation to determine whether the classical Greek political theorists influenced NT attitudes towards wives, children, and slaves, starts with Plato’s *Republic* written some time between 384 and 370 B.C. and in which he mentions the relationship between the “house” and the “city” (23). Discussing the justice of the city, Plato relates that it is just for each person to have his/her social place and duty.

“The each one man must perform one social service in the state for which his nature was best adapted.” “Yes, we said that.” “And again that to do one’s own business and not to be a busybody is justice.” ... “If we were required to decide what it is whose indwelling presence will contribute most to making our city good, it would be a difficult decision whether it was the unanimity of rulers and ruled or the conservation in the minds of the soldiers of the convictions produced by law as to what things are or are not to be feared, or the watchful intelligence that resides in the guardians, or whether this is the chief cause of its goodness, the principle embodied in child, woman, slave, free, artisan, ruler, and ruled, that each performed his one task as one man and was not a versatile busybody.” (iv. 433a, c-d)²²

Not only the ruler but also the ruled, such as children, women, slaves, should keep their assigned social positions and perform their functions. In iv. 431b, Plato declares it to be just and “sober” that “the superior rules the inferior.” “Children and women and slaves”

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belong to the place of submission just as a man’s “appetites” should be ruled by his “reason” (iv. 431c).\(^73\)

Plato’s *Laws* written in 347 B.C. also observes that as each individual has both a superior part and an inferior part in him, house, village, and city have the same condition. Balch quotes “a striking passage” that spells this out. The following is the first part of it:

Very well then: what and how many are the agreed rights or claims in the matter of ruling and being ruled, alike in States, large or small, and in households? Is not the right of father and mother one of them? And in general would not the claim of parents to rule over offspring be a claim universally just? Certainly. And next to this, the right of the noble to rule over the ignoble; and then, following on these as a third claim, the right of older people to rule and of younger to be ruled. To be sure. The fourth right is that slaves ought to be ruled, and masters ought to rule. Undoubtedly. And the fifth is, I imagine, that the stronger should rule and the weaker be ruled. A truly compulsory form of rule, … being “according to nature,” … The most important right is, it would seem, the sixth, which ordains that the man without understanding should follow, and the wise man lead and rule …. This is … the natural rule of law, without force, over willing subjects. (iii. 690a, c-d)\(^74\)

The similarity that the house and the city have is the fact that they must have a ruler and the ruled: parents-children, the noble-the ignoble, the older-the younger, masters-slaves, the stronger-the weaker, and the wise-the unwise. He finds another pair, that of man-woman in xi. 917a, which reads, “Now the better are the superiors of the worse, and the older in general of the younger; wherefore also parents are superior to their offspring, *men to women* and children, rulers to ruled.”\(^75\)


Balch points out that these are not Plato’s original thoughts but “the agreed rights or claims.” The life of the city starts with the house and the lack of submission in one relationship in the household “spills over into other relationships” in the city (25). Therefore, the household relationships, which have to do with the woman’s place in the household and in society, children’s education, and the treatment of slaves, “are here part of a social-political, philosophic ethic” (26). What Balch seeks to show in his study of the Middle Platonists – Albinus, Apuleius, and Diogenes Laertius – is that even though Plato’s political thought was not a dominant element in them, they still dealt with ruling and being ruled in city and house in the second and third centuries A.D. Many of Platonic excerpts were kept by Stobaeus in his anthology in the early fourth century A.D. Also the chapter titles in it – “Concerning Justice,” “Concerning the Constitution,” “Concerning Laws,” “Concerning Marriage,” and “Concerning Household Management” – which had been topoi in Plato’s time indicate that they were still topoi 700 years later in Stobaeus’ time.

What tells us more eloquently about Plato and the topoi in his time having been current as popular ideas and available to the early Christian writers in the Roman imperial age when the NT Haustafeln were written, is Dio Chrysostom’s oration, “Domestic Affairs.” The place and time Dio lived were near where 1 Peter was written (29). Even though only 6 brief fragments of it are left in Stobaeus’ anthology, these fragments talk about master’s moderation with his slaves, wife’s love of husband, and the rearing of offspring in love. For example, concerning the master’s attitude toward his slaves, Dio writes, “Therefore one ought to act the master with moderation and permit any who so
desire to relax at times. For intervals of relaxation are preparatory for labours – both bow and lyre and men as well are at their best through relaxation.”

Balch moves on to make his main point that Aristotle’s outline of the topos “on household management” is important in the determination of the origin of the NT codes. In *Politics*, written in 335 B.C., Aristotle agrees with Plato saying that the discussion of the constitution must begin with marriage which is a union “of natural ruler and subject” (1252a 31). The city-state “is a creation of nature” and “man is by nature a political animal” (1253a 2-3). Following Plato, he notes that “justice is the bond of men in states” (1253a 37). “The most important parallel to the NT codes” (34) appears in 1253b 1-14:

Seeing then that the state is made up of households, before speaking of the state we must speak of the management of the household. The parts of household management correspond to the persons who compose the household, and a complete household consists of slaves and freemen. Now we should begin by examining everything in its fewest possible elements; and the first and fewest possible parts of a family are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. We have therefore to consider what each of these three relations is and ought to be: – I mean the relation of master and servant, the marriage relation (the conjunction of man and wife has no name of its own), and thirdly, the paternal relation (this also has no proper name). And there is another element of a household, the so-called art of getting wealth, which, according to some, is identical with household management, according to others, a principal part of it; the nature of this art will also have to be considered by us. (Emphasis added)

Balch argues that it is neither a Jewish nor a Christian innovation to discuss these three relationships in a household, because he takes this passage as an evidence of the fact “that the pattern of submissiveness (ep. the three pairs in Col. 3:18-4:1) was based upon an

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earlier Aristotelian topos ‘concerning household management’” (34). He goes on to conclude that the household code in 1 Peter is “adapted” from the same topos (109).

As in Colossians and 1 Peter, if not in Ephesians (46 n. 6), the master-slave section is expanded and discussed at a greater length than the other two pairs in Politics i. There were criticisms of slavery in Greece, such as the sophist Alcidamus’, whose assertion was that “God has set all men free; nature has made no man a slave.” It reminds one of Philo’s citations of such an opinion that “servants are free by nature, no man being naturally a slave” in The Special Laws ii. 69 and that “Servants are ranked lower in fortune but in nature can claim equality with their masters,” as quoted before, in iii. 139.

Aristotle acknowledges the existence of this opinion, when he says, “Others affirm that the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature, and that the distinction between slave and freeman exists by convention only, and not by nature; and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust” in 1253b 20-23. However, Aristotle’s position is clearly the opposing one. A person who is owned by another is “by nature a slave” and “also a possession” (1254a 15-16). Slavery is expedient as well as necessary, he writes, “that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule” (1254a 22-24). The same idea is expressed in 1255a 1-2, “It is clear, then, that some

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men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right.”

Thus, to Aristotle, what determines the ruler and the ruled is nature, but the three pairs differ in the kind of rule that applies to them.

Therefore almost all things rule and are ruled according to nature. But the kind of rule differs – the freeman rules over the slave after another manner from that in which the male rules over the female, or the man over the child; although the parts of the soul are present in all of them, they are present in different degrees. For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has, but it is immature. (1260a 9-14)

Likewise, each member of the pairs has a different measure of excellence of character.

For example, courage is shown in a man in commanding, while in a woman it is expressed in obeying (1260a 23-24). Aristotle writes, “Silence is a woman’s glory, but this is not equally the glory of man” (1260a 30-31). Since “every family is a part of a state” (1260b 13), the form of rule in the household is necessarily related to the state’s form of the constitution.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle compares a variety of forms of authority in the household with those in the state. He finds various forms of constitutions in the household as in the state, that is, kingship, tyranny, aristocracy, oligarchy, timocracy, and democracy. The following shows most of them:

Resemblances to these – indeed, a sort of pattern of them – can also be found in households. For the community of a father and his sons has the structure of kingship, since the father is concerned for his children. Indeed that is why Homer also calls Zeus father, since kingship is meant to be paternal rule. Among the Persians, however, the father’s rule is tyrannical, since he treats his sons as slaves. The rule of a master over his slaves is also tyrannical, since it is the master’s advantage that is achieved in it. This, then, appears a correct form of rule, whereas the Persian form appears erroneous, since the different types of rule suit different
subjects. The community of man and woman appears aristocratic. For the man’s rule in the area where it is right accords with the worth [of each], and he commits to the woman what is fitting for her. If, however, the man controls everything, he changes it into an oligarchy; for then his action does not accord with the worth [of each], or with the respect in which [each] is better. Sometimes, indeed, women rule because they are heiresses; these cases of rule do not accord with virtue, but result from wealth and power, as is true in oligarchies. … Democracy is found most of all in dwellings without a master, since everyone there is on equal terms; and also in those where the ruler is weak and everyone is free [to do what he likes]. (NE viii. 1160b 24-1161a 9)  

Aristotle takes hierarchical authority as something right and just. A slave is one’s possession and a child is a part of oneself, so “there is no injustice in relation to them” (NE v. 1134b 13). When comparing justice in the three pairs of a household, he admits that “relations with a wife more than with children or possessions allow something to count as just” (NE v. 1134b 17). However, he condemns allowing women equality and authority, because it causes the government to degenerate and the wars lost. Balch characterizes Aristotle’s argument as being “in high tension with modern egalitarian, democratic thought” (36). Aristotle says in Politics, “Whether women rule or the rulers are ruled by women,” the “result is the same”: “the disorder of the women … not only gives an air of indecorum to the constitution considered in itself, but tends in a measure to foster avarice” (Pol. ii. 1269b 33-1270a 15).

According to Balch, Aristotle’s ideas were not held as important in the Hellenistic age for two centuries after his death, but the late first century B.C. saw a revival of the Peripatetic school reestablished by Andronicus of Rhodes (38). Balch lists Theophrastus’ Concerning Laws, Dicaearchus’ Mixed Constitution and On Greek Life, the pseudo-

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80 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 131. Parentheses are original in translation. Further quotations from the book will be indicated in the text as shown above.
Aristotelian works *Great Ethics* and *Concerning Household Management* (the latter possibly Theophrastus’) as the texts which demonstrate that constitutions and household management were frequently discussed in the Peripatetic school (38-39). Especially, *Concerning Household Management* used the Aristotelian topos “concerning household management” with its typical concern for husband and wife, slaves, children, and household income, the last of which was not mentioned in the *Great Ethics* as it is not in the NT (45).

Cyril Armstrong writes in the introduction to his translation of Pseudo-Aristotle’s *Concerning Household Management*, “According to Susemihl, although it differs in certain points from the teaching of Aristotle, it is unmistakably the work of an early Peripatetic, uncoloured as yet by any tincture of Stoicism.”81 In *Great Ethics* i. 1194b 5-28, Pseudo-Aristotle refers to “justice between slave and master, and between son and father,” and “in the partnership of husband and wife.” He echoes Aristotle when he says that “the slave is a chattel of his lord” and that the “wife is inferior to her husband.”82

Balch presents the Stoic Areius Didymus’ work, an *Epitome* of Aristotle’s ideas, as important evidence that this ethic of household management was a broad and general one in the first century B.C., which Greeks and Romans learned through standardized lectures and textbooks (41, 45). His outline of Aristotle’s topos on household management very closely parallels Aristotle’s own writings, and more importantly, Balch points out, it “is quite similar to the NT codes of household ethics” (41). Even though the

82 Ibid., 541-43.
household relationships are not presented by pairs in his outline as in the NT household
codes, a concern for authority in the household is there together with the classes that
constitute it.

The man has the rule of this house by nature. For the deliberative faculty in a
woman is inferior, in children it does not yet exist, and it is completely foreign to
slaves. Rational household management, which is the controlling of a house and
of those things related to the house, is fitting for a man.83

Balch finds the fact that women, children, and slaves are mentioned in the same order
here as in Colossians and Ephesians especially important “in the discussion of the origin
of the NT codes” (43).

There are other philosophers between the late first century B.C. and the third
century A.D. whose works indicate that these ideas on household management were
acknowledged as Aristotelian in their times. Diogenes Laertius summarizes Aristotle’s
philosophy in a way that is comparable to Areius Didymus’. Dividing Aristotle’s
philosophy into practical and theoretical parts, Laertius notes, “The practical part
includes ethics and politics, and in the latter not only the doctrine of the state but also that
of the household is sketched” (v. 28).84 Seneca’s Epistles 89.10-11 shows a similar
observation:

Certain of the Peripatetic school have added a fourth division, “civil philosophy,”
because it calls for a special sphere of activity and is interested in a different
subject matter. Some have added a department for which they use the Greek term
“economics,” the science of managing one’s own household.85

83 Areius Didymus, “Epitome,” Stobaeus, Anthologium, ed. C. Wachsmuth, ii. 149.5-9 translated by Balch
on p. 42.
84 Diogenes Laertius, 1966, 475.
Balch takes pains to show the Aristotelian origin of the form of the domestic code in Aristo, ironically in his rejection of it as part of philosophy, as we noted (See pp. 45-46). The dispute in early Stoicism between Aristo and Chrysippus whether the Aristotelian concern for civic science and for the household should be retained in philosophical discussions is, to Balch, good evidence that the outline of the classical discussions had popular availability. Especially he suspects that Chrysippus followed Aristo in his listing of duties toward wives, children, and slaves. He makes the case using Adolf Dyroff’s contention that Chrysippus is the main source of Pseudo-Plutarch, The Education of Children 7E, in which these duties are listed: “to be chaste with women, to be affectionate with children, and not to be overbearing with slaves.”

Rejecting Crouch’s comment on Seneca’s Epistles 94.1-2 that “For the first time we have before us a schema which is limited to the relationships within the household” (C, 60), Balch argues that Seneca, Aristo, and Hecaton were referring to “a form which, with these three pairs, was exactly outlined by Aristo” in Politics i. 1253b 6-8 (51). He shows that philosophers who were close in time and place to the NT writers also used this Aristotelian form of discussion of household governance. As a backdrop for “the centrally important text” in Philo’s The Decalogue 165-167, Balch quotes his On Joseph, That Is, The Life of the Statesman 38-39, to show the influence of Platonic-Aristotelian ideas of political science on Hellenistic Jews.

86 Pseudo-Plutarch, 35. Quoted earlier on p. 49.
87 With Hierocles added to the list of these “eclectic Stoics,” Balch clarifies later (117) that Seneca is the only certain case of being directly dependent on Aristo.
So, while in outward appearance it was his purchaser who appointed him steward of his household, in fact and reality it was nature’s doing, who was taking steps to procure for him the command of whole cities and a nation and a great country. For the future statesman needed first to be trained and practiced in house management; for a house is a city compressed into a small dimensions, and household management may be called a kind of state management, just as a city too is a great house and statesmanship the household management of the general public. All this shows clearly that the household manager is identical with the statesman, however much what is under the purview of the two may differ in number and size.\(^88\)

In the matter of the identity of city and house management, Philo agreed with Plato rather than with Aristotle.

A similar view is seen in his *Special Laws* iii. 169-171, in which he discusses women’s modesty.

The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens as their boundary, and the outer door by those who have reached full womanhood. Organized communities are of two sorts, the greater which we call cities and the smaller which we call households. Both of these have their governors; the government of the greater is assigned to men under the name of statesmanship, that of the lesser, known as household management, to women. A woman, then, should not be a busybody, meddling with matters outside her household concerns, but should seek a life of seclusion. She should not show herself off like a vagrant in the streets before the eyes of other men, except when she has to go to the temple.\(^89\)

Balch also quotes Philo’s *The Decalogue* 165-167 and *Special Laws* ii. 225-227 as Crouch does (C, 78-80), with the claim that “Philo was interpreting the Decalogue in light of Platonic and Aristotelian political ethics” (53-54). By arguing Philo’s use of the Hellenistic ethical material, Balch rejects both Schroeder, who suggests that the pairs in


\(^{89}\) Philo, *Philo*, Vol. 7 (1958), 581-83. It is noteworthy that Philo sees that the household management is assigned to women, while Areius Didymus writes that it “is fitting for a man.” Their similarity outweighs their seeming difference, however, because both are concerned about showing women’s limited intellectual ability and authority.
Philo and the interest in one member’s obedience to the other in each pair were an organic development out of the Decalogue, and Crouch, whose claim is that the hierarchically related pairs originated from a Jewish-Oriental characteristic (53). It is the Roman patria potestas, Balch argues, that added the stress on the obedience that was already there in the Platonic-Aristotelian discussion of the household management.

Philo’s The Posterity and Exile of Cain 181 (See p. 52) is the work that Balch quotes – “honor paid to parents, loving care of a wife, bringing up of children, happy and blameless relations with domestic servants, …” – to show that Philo combined elements of the two topoi, “concerning household management” and “concerning the constitution.” Balch finds here close parallels to elements in Platonic-Aristotelian ethics. He also sees a similar rejection of the practices destructive of the state and home in Epictetus, Discourses iii. 7.19-22, which is directed against Epicureans.

In the name of God, I ask you, can you imagine an Epicurean State? One man says, “I do not marry.” “Neither do I,” says another, “for people ought not to marry.” No, nor have children; no, nor perform the duties of a citizen. And what, do you suppose, will happen then? Where are the citizens to come from? Who will educate them? Who will be superintendent of the ephebi, or gymnasium director? Yes, and what will either of these teach them? What the young men of Lacedaemon or Athens were taught? Take me a young man; bring him up according to your doctrines. Your doctrines are bad, subversive of the State, destructive to the family, not even fit for women. Drop these doctrines, man. You live in an imperial State; it is your duty to hold office, to judge uprightly, to keep your hands off the property of other people; no woman but your wife ought to look handsome to you, no boy handsome, no silver plate handsome, no gold plate.90

Balch adds to Weidinger’s and Crouch’s acknowledgement that Josephus, Against Apion ii (See p. 54) contains close parallels to the NT codes of submission in the

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household, the fact that the work followed closely the Hellenistic rhetorical outline for an
encomium. Josephus’ description of the roles of women, children, and slaves in the
society easily finds parallels in rhetorical handbooks of the day and most notably in
Dionysius Halicarnassus’ encomium of Rome about a century earlier in his *Roman
Antiquities* i. 9 – ii. 29, which was written in 30-7 B.C. Dionysius shows the
characteristic of Greek political and rhetorical writings that connect the constitution and
the household, when he observes that “every State” is composed of “many families” (ii.
24.2)\(^91\) and that therefore the constitution should regulate marriages.

When Dionysius talks about a law passed by Romulus, founder of Rome, he
sounds very close to Josephus who listed the submission of wives, children, and slaves in
*Against Apion*. Dionysius writes on women first:

> This law obliged both the married women, as having no other refuge, to conform
> themselves entirely to the temper of their husbands, and the husbands to rule their
> wives as necessary and inseparable possessions. Accordingly, if a wife was
> virtuous and in all things obedient to her husband, she was mistress of the house
> to the same degree as her husband was master of it, and after the death of her
> husband she was heir to his property in the same manner as a daughter was to that
> of her father …. (ii. 25.4-5)

Women’s wayward behaviors were punished “with merciless severity” (ii. 25.7). He then
mentions the laws “with respect to reverence and dutifulness of children toward their
parents, to the end that they should honour and obey them in all things, both in their
words and actions” (ii. 26.1). The father had “full power … over his son,” even “to put
him to death” (ii. 26.4). Cruel, severe, and harsh punishments followed children’s

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disobedience. Roman laws gave “greater power to the father over his son than to the
master over his slaves” (ii. 27.1).

Balch observes that Dionysius “used the Aristotelian three pairs – wives and
husbands, children and parents, master and slaves (in the same order as the pairs in
Colossians).” In addition, his work shows parallels to the NT in that “duties of wives
precede those of husbands (ii. 25.4), and those of children precede those of fathers (ii.
26.1 and 4),” even though it does not elaborate on the relationship of masters and slaves
(55). In other words, Dionysius’ is “a closer parallel to the NT codes than Josephus,
Against Apion ii. 199, the parallel commonly cited” (75). In terms of the attitude toward
slaves, Hellenistic Judaism “assimilated Aristotle’s repressive ideas” rather than
maintaining Moses’ protective ones (55). Even though it is hard to trace the immediate
source of Philo’s writings on household management, Balch finds it unquestionable that
the texts of Seneca, Hierocles, Philo, and Josephus have their closest parallels in Plato
and Aristotle. As they were common in the Greco-Roman society as late as the first and
second centuries A.D., classical Greek thoughts “were taken over by Hellenistic Judaism
and used to interpret the Decalogue” (56).

Another group of writings that is “strikingly similar to the NT statements about
marriage and household ethics” is the Neopythagoreans’, which show the availability of
the Platonic-Aristotelian ideas in the culture of imperial Rome, when the NT writings
were written. Using Martin Plessner’s observation, Balch shows that the outline for the
treatise, On Household Management, by the Neopythagorean Bryson reflects the
Aristotelian form found in Politics i. 1253b 6-8. The first sentence of the treatise reads,
“He says, the topos ‘household management’ is complete in four things; the first of them concerns money, the second slaves, the third the wife, and the fourth children.”

The continued concern for the relationship between the “house” and the “city” is seen in the Neopythagorean authors. Callicratidas, On the Felicity of Families, says, “Just as the world and divine affairs are in correspondence, a family and a city stand in relation analogous to the government of the world.” Similarly, Ocellus says that “man should be considered in connection with the social organism, a house or city” in On the Nature of the Universe.

The Neopythagoreans also show a concern about the subordination of the weaker groups: wives, children, and slaves. Callicratidas writes in the same work, “Every system consists of certain dissimilar contraries, and is organized with reference to one particular thing, which is the most excellent,” and then continues, “Now a family is also a system of kindred communion, consisting of dissimilar proper parts organized in view of the best thing, the father of the family ….” Concerning the submission of wife, he takes it for granted that the husband governs and the wife governed. His statements below resemble Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics viii. 1160b 23-1161a 9 quoted earlier (See pp. 65-66).

Since therefore the husband rules over the wife, he rules with a power either despotic, protective, or political. Despotic power is out of the question, as he diligently attends to her welfare; nor is it protective entirely, for he has to consider himself also. It remains therefore that he rules over her with a political power, according to which both the governor and the governed seek the common advantage. Hence wedlock is established with a view to the communion of life.

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93 The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library, 236.
94 Ibid., 209.
Those husbands that govern their wives despotically are by them hated; those that
govern them protectively are despised, being as it were mere appendages and
flatterers of their wives. But those that govern them politically are both admired
and beloved.

Callicratidas continues,

Those who marry a woman above their condition have to contend for the
mastership; for the wife, surpassing her husband in wealth and lineage, wishes to
rule over him, but he considers it to be unworthy of him and unnatural to submit
to his wife.\textsuperscript{95}

A similar statement is found in Ocellus: “For the wife who surpasses her husband
in wealth, in birth, or in friends, is desirous of ruling over him, contrary to the law of
nature.” Here we see the common resistance to husband’s submission to the wife seen as
‘unnatural.’ Ocellus continues, “But the husband justly resisting this desire of superiority
in his wife, and wishing not to be the second, but the first in domestic sway, is unable in
the management of his family to take the lead.”\textsuperscript{96} Hierocles also in his Ethical Fragments
refers to those men who celebrate “nuptials to their own destruction, and with crowned
doors introduce to themselves instead of a wife a tyrant, whom they cannot resist, and
with whom they are unable to contend for chief authority.”\textsuperscript{97}

Examples that show the exhortation to children that they be subordinate are also
found. Perictione, On the Harmony of a Woman 145.8-13 reads, “Parents ought not to be
injured either in word or deed; and whether their rank in life, great or small, they should
be obeyed.” The necessity to take care of them in person and not to abandon them is
emphasized, along with the admonition “almost [to] submit to them even when they are

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 235-36.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 210.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 282-83.
insane.” Pempetus also echoes him in his *On Parents*: “Every intelligent person, therefore, should honor and venerate his parents.”

Balch notes Friedrich Wilhelm’s observation that every Neopythagorean discussion of household management – the works of Bryson, Callicratidas, Perictione, and Phintys – treats slaves (57). He immediately connects this with the fact that the NT household codes regularly treat slaves: i.e., Col. 3:22-25; Eph. 6:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:18-25; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; and Titus 2:9-10. Balch lists Seneca, *Epistles* 94:1-3 and Pseudo-Plutarch, *The Education of Children* 10 as the only instances in Stoicism of referring to the list of duties that include masters’ treatment of slaves. He emphasizes the dependence of even those rare Stoic instances on the Aristotelian ideas by pointing out that they were only quoting Ariston and Chrysippus respectively, who debated “about retaining the Aristotelian concern for wives, children, and slaves as a part of Stoic philosophy” around 250 B.C. (57).

He stresses that Judaism also has only a couple of “unusual examples” in *The Sibyllian Oracles* ii.278 and Philo, *The Decalogue* 167, and that generally the Jews were not very interested in discussing the social duties of slaves. All these are to claim one more time that the probable source of the concern for slaves’ duties is the Aristotelian tradition. He reaches the conclusion that in the Roman age, the classical Platonic-Aristotelian topoi were available and that their discussions are found in Middle Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics, Epicureans, Hellenistic Jews, and Neopythagoreans.

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98 Ibid., 240.
99 Ibid., 243.
(B) The Apologetic Use of the Subordination Ethic in Roman Society

Balch’s study of the minority religious communities that made apologetic use of the hierarchical ethic involving subordination of members of a household is poignant. He clearly has the household code in 1 Peter in mind, but his study has relevance to the other NT household codes including the code in Colossians. The Greek ethic, which dealt with household relations between dominant and subordinate members, within the larger framework of the constitution, became “a standard for household behavior” in Roman society, especially in aristocratic segments (63). Minority religious communities – the devotees of the cults of Dionysus and Isis, the Jews, and later Christians – were pressured to adjust themselves to this social climate. The social-political tension, which these communities had with the Romans, was mostly over the ways in which wives and/or slaves related to their husbands/masters.

What the Romans found most problematic was the Roman ladies’ involvement with these Eastern foreign cults, which they blamed for causing moral corruption. The typical criticisms that were directed against the Dionysus and Isis cults were thrown at Judaism and Christianity, too. Already around 400 B.C., the conflict between the Dionysus cult and Greek society found its expression in Euripides, Bacchae, “the most popular play in the Hellenistic world” (67). The work expresses the characteristic animosity toward the rites and practices around the Dionysus worship. Pentheus the king says,

I happened to be out of the country, but I hear of strange mischief in this city, that the women have left our homes in fictitious ecstatic rites and flit about on the thick-shaded mountains, honoring the new god Dionysus, whoever he is, with
their dancing. They set up full wine bowls in the middle of their assemblies and sneak off, one here, one there, to tryst in private with men. The pretext for all this is that they are maenads performing their rites, but they hold Aphrodite in higher regard than the bacchic god. (*Bacchae*, 215-225)\textsuperscript{100}

They held profound suspicion in the “foreigner [who] has arrived from Lydia, a wizard, an enchanter, [whose] blond locks reeking of scent, with a face wine-colored and the charm of Aphrodite in his eyes … [who] consorts day and night with the young women, offering them ecstatic rites” (*Bacchae*, 233-238). They accused him as the “effeminate stranger who is infecting the women with a new disease and playing havoc with their marriages” (*Bacchae*, 352-354).

Continued into Roman times in an increased number of devotees, this Dionysian custom was reacted against with bans, accusations of conspiracy, imprisonment, and killing (68). Balch’s assessment of these responses of the Romans is that they conceal something that they really feared.

The cult’s moral offensiveness is not adequate to explain the ban. Romans imagined revolution brewing, and they reacted to what they considered to be a politically volatile situation with slanders against the cult: ritual murder and obscenities occurred. These same charges were later made against the Jews and Christians. (68)

Relying on Franz Bömer’s study of slaves’ religion in Greece and Rome, Balch strongly doubts that foreign cults that were comprised of slaves were a political threat. Rather than fearing a revolt of foreign slaves who were adherents of the Dionysus cult, Balch concludes, the Romans’ “main problem was that Roman women joined the cult, and the

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Romans reacted with certain typical slanders: the cult was revolutionary, and the rites involved murder and sexual immorality” (69).

Similar slanders were directed against the Isis cult which “had grown to be the dominant faith of the world” by the time of Augustus. Balch quotes R. E. Witt:

> It was an international religion. In the service of the Queen of the Whole Universe fellow slaves could band themselves together and feel free, coloured Africans could join with Romans, and women could claim the same power as men. But Isis could allure men of far more exalted rank than slaves.  

More than anything else, the thought that greatly offended the Romans is that Isis reversed the proper relationships between men and women. Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* i. 27.1-2 is helpful to understand the influence of the Isis cult.

> The Egyptians also made a law, they say, contrary to the general custom of mankind, permitting men to marry their sisters, this being due to the success attained by Isis in this respect; for she had married her brother Osiris, and upon his death, having taken a vow never to marry another man, she both avenged the murder of her husband and reigned all her days over the land with complete respect for the laws, and, in a word, became the cause of more and greater blessings to all men than any other. It is for these reasons, in fact, that it was ordained that the queen should have greater power and honour than the king and that among private persons the wife should enjoy authority over her husband, the husbands agreeing in the marriage contract that they will be obedient in all things to their wives.

Herodotus, *Histories* ii. 35 has a parallel account of Egyptian customs that they are “of a kind contrary for the most part to those of all other men,” because “Among them, the

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women buy and sell, the men abide at home and weave.”  

Isis is praised in *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 1380, “You gave the women the same power as the men.”

Balch attests to the social status that Egyptian women enjoyed that was equal to their husbands’, especially in the Old Kingdom before 2270 B.C. and during the eighteenth dynasty between 1580 and 1341 B.C. Using Jacques Pirenne’s study, Balch emphasizes that “in the twenty-sixth dynasty (663-525 B.C.) wives obtained absolute equality in marriage, which continued until the arrival of the Ptolemies in Egypt” (72). Naturally, the Egyptian Isis cult was viewed as a threat to Roman customs due to its interference with men’s rule of women. Romans believed that the success of Rome resulted from its constitution which Romulus constructed, with its regulations on women’s temperance and obedience to husbands. The Isis devotees were disapproved of by Romans.

What Balch finds most interesting is what this disapproval produced within the Isis cult. Lucius Apuleius, a devotee himself, wrote in *Metamorphoses* xi. 30 that the goddess appeared to him in his sleep to command him to persevere with the resentment and slanders against the religion. Note his report of the Isis priest’s words during the procession:

> Then from the lofty platform he read aloud from a book verbatim, first pronouncing prayers for the prosperity of the great Emperor, the Senate, the knights, and the entire Roman people, for the sailors and ships under the rule of our world-wide empire. … (xi. 17)

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This prayer has significance, because it “corresponds to a desire to reassure a suspicious Roman society of the loyalty of the cult to the state” (72), and Balch traces the same intent in several NT Haustafeln – Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16, and 1 Tim. 2:1, 8 – which “occur in the context of a communal worship service” (79 n. 47).

The Jews’ practices – their constitution including the structure of marriage and household relationships – were criticized as well by the Romans. Diodorus of Sicily, Library of History 40.3.8 records Hecataeus of Abdera’s observation that “As to marriage and the burial of the dead, he [Moses] saw to it that their customs should differ widely from those of other men.” Tacitus, Histories is noteworthy in its negative account on the same subject: “To establish his influence over this people for all time, Moses introduced new religious practices, quite opposed to those of all other religions. The Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor” (v. 4). He continues with the criticism:

Towards every other people they feel only hate and enmity. They sit apart at meals, and they sleep apart, and although as a race, they are prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women; yet among themselves nothing is unlawful. (v. 5)

Balch argues that Philo’s and Josephus’ aforementioned statements about women’s submission – such as Josephus, Against Apion ii. 201: “The women, says the law, is in all things inferior to the man; let her accordingly be submissive” (See p. 54) –

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were their response to these slanders against the Jewish practices. Emphatically he says, “This was apologetic, a defensive response to prior Roman slanders. According to Philo and Josephus, Hellenistic Judaism accepted the household ethic demanded of it by the dominant Greco-Roman society” (73). The Jewish writers wanted to convince the Romans that Jews were obedient Roman citizens and that Jewish customs were not any threat to Romulus’ constitution. Here two of Balch’s main points intersect each other: that the apologetic motive was behind the ultra-conservatism of the Hellenistic Jews and that the source of the household ethic of that time was the Platonic-Aristotelian ideas of the constitution and of the household management. And these do not negate the emphasis of the Colossian Haustafel on specifically Christian subordination, because those ideas were thoroughly christianized in the NT codes.

Ultimately, what mattered was the threat of subversion of the Roman constitution that these foreign cults posed with their customs that were reverse to the Greek and Roman laws. Cicero, *The Republic* i. 67 talks about anarchy in which “youths take on the gravity of age, and old men stoop to the games of youth …. Under such conditions even the slaves come to behave with unseemly freedom, wives have the same rights as their husbands.” We see all three groups in Aristotle mentioned here. Cicero continues, paraphrasing Plato:

“Therefore,” he concludes, “the final result of this boundless license is that the minds of the citizens become so squeamish and sensitive that, if the authority of government is exercised in the smallest degree, they become angry and cannot

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bear it. On this account they begin to neglect the laws as well, and so finally are utterly without a master of any kind.” (i. 67)

This gives Balch the basis on which he writes,

Greco-Roman political science often drew an analogy between the house and the city: the rejection of the husband’s authority by the wife, or of the master’s authority by the slave, or of the father’s authority by sons led to anarchy in both home and city, to the rejection of the king’s authority, and to the degeneration of the constitution from monarchy to democracy. (76)

This apologetic purpose of their writing is made clear in Josephus, Against Apion ii. 147, where he says, “My object is not to compose a panegyric upon our nation; but I consider that, in reply to the numerous false accusations which are brought against us, the fairest defense which we can offer is to be found in the laws which govern our daily life.”

In the Roman Empire, the religion of women and the household slaves was determined by the religion of their husbands/masters. It was assumed as a rule that they would take the cults of the head of the household. As mentioned before, when Roman women joined the Dionysius cult, the society reacted to that with typical slanders about the moral corruption and sedition. The same commotion occurred when the Jewish and Christian slaves did not accept the masters’ religion and stuck to their own. Balch translates Bömer:

In Rome the slaves enjoyed, from ancient times, greater independence [than in Greece] in those spheres in which their masters placed them; but “in those spheres” means that they, willingly or unwillingly, gave up the gods of their homeland and worshiped the gods of the Romans. That was so taken for granted that the first and

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only groups which behaved differently, the Jews and the Christians, caused a colossal sensation, and these were not composed exclusively of slaves. (68-69)\textsuperscript{110}

Tacitus, \textit{Histories} v. 5 testifies to the even greater resentment that the Romans felt about the Jewish proselytes:

For the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending tribute and contributions to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews …. Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice, and the earliest lesson they receive is to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account.\textsuperscript{111}

The similar concern about the cultic practices of women and slaves is expressed in Cicero, \textit{Laws} ii. 8.19, which reads, “No one shall have gods to himself, either new gods or alien gods, unless recognized by the State. Privately they shall worship those gods whose worship they have duly received from their ancestors.” In ii. 9.21 one finds, “No sacrifices shall be performed by women at night except those offered for the people in proper form.”\textsuperscript{112} As one of the most important references to this issue, Balch quotes Plutarch, \textit{Advice to Bride and Groom} 140D:

A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband’s friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods that her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{110} Quoted and translated from Franz Bömer, \textit{Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom, Vierter Teil: Epilegomena} (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse; Mainz: F. Steiner, 1963), 259.


Peter’s admonition in 1 Peter, then, is in contrast with Plutarch’s because in it wives and slaves are admonished to remain Christians and to endure slanders and suffering. 1 Peter 4:14, for example, reads, “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you,” and similar statements are found in 2:20; 3:17; and 4:16.

It is interesting that Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* vi. 21-22 also called women and slaves within the cult of Isis “to a high morality in the social situation where a master demanded rights over the body of his female slave” (110 n. 15). After undergoing many tragic misadventures as a slave, Leucippe in Ephesus addresses her lecherous master Thersander in defiance:

Feast your eyes with a new sight; one woman contends against all manner of tortures, and overcomes all her trials. … Tell me, pray, have you no fear of your own patroness Artemis, that you would ravish a virgin in the virgin’s city? … I am defenseless, and alone, and a woman; but one shield I have, and that is my free soul, which cannot be subdued by the cutting of the lash, or the piercing of the sword, or the burning of the fire. That is a possession I will never surrender; no, not I: and burn as you will, you will find that there is no fire hot enough to consume it!\(^\text{14}\)

The Greco-Roman attitude did not keep many women from becoming Jewish or Christian proselytes. Conversion caused problems in households as examples from later Christian history reveal. *Recognitions of St. Clement* 2:29 records, “When differences arise in any household between a believer and an unbeliever, an inevitable conflict arises, the

unbelievers fighting against the faith, and the faithful refuting their old error and sinful vices.”

Tertullian testifies in *Apology* to the hardships Christians endured to keep their faith: “So we are tortured when we confess; we are punished when we persist; we are acquitted when we deny; all because the battle is for a name” (ii. 19). He, then, mentions the problems caused by conversion in the household.

The wife is chaste now; but the husband has ceased to be jealous, and has turned her out. The son is now submissive; but the father, who used to bear with his ways, has disinherited him. The slave is faithful now; but the master, once so gentle, has banished him from his sight. As sure as a man is reformed by the name, he gives offense. The advantage does not balance the hatred felt for Christians. (iii. 4)

As Balch points out, this quotation has the three pairs that the Colossian household code has and the social situation reflected in it is similar to that of 1 Peter. Both the Emperor Julian, *Against the Galileans* 206a, and the pagan critic Celsus complained about Christianity deluding maidservants, slaves, and women. Origen, *Against Celsus* iii. 44 shows Celsus’ derision that Christians were “able to convince only the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women and little children.”

Christians were slandered and persecuted, because they worshiped Christ to the exclusion of the Roman gods. The new converts’ refusal to worship the gods of their fathers divided the household. The absolute harmony that was demanded by a pagan master/husband, which included both husband and wife being consecrated to the gods

(Hierocles, “Concerning Marriage” iv. 505.5-22), was rejected by Christians who were newly converted (89). Apuleius, The Golden Ass ix. 14 describes a Christian woman in a derisive way, and thus “expresses his dislike and contempt of the new religion,” as S. Gaselee comments on the passage. 118

The baker which bought me was an honest and sober man, but his wife the most pestilent woman to all the world, in so much that he endured with her many miseries and afflictions to his bed and house, so that I myself did secretly pity his estate and bewail his evil fortune: for there was not one single fault that was lacking to her, but all the mischiefs that could be devised had flowed into her heart as into some filthy privy; she was crabbed, cruel, cursed, drunken, obstinate, niggish, covetous in base robberies, riotous in filthy expenses, an enemy to faith and chastity, a despiser of all the gods whom others did honour, one that affirmed that she had instead of our sure religion an only god by herself, whereby, inventing empty rites and ceremonies, she deceived all men, but especially her poor husband, delighting in drinking wine, yea, early in the morning, and abandoning her body to continual whoredom.

This kind of reaction to the conversion of a wife makes it easy for us to understand the exhortation found in 1 Peter 2:12, “Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge.”

Emperor Julian, Misopogon 355a-357a provides “a close parallel to the situation that called forth the domestic code in 1 Peter” (91). He criticizes “the temper of the city” Antioch, whose people had become Christians and refused to worship the old gods, for being “excessively independent.”119 He blames them that they “permitted the women to


govern themselves,” who in turn influenced their children to grow up to refuse all kinds of authority: “first, you begin by refusing slavery to the gods, secondly to the laws, and thirdly to me who am the guardian of the laws.” Those who governed Rome certainly likened the house to a small city and thought that accordingly “insubordination in one led to insubordination in the other” (94). Balch argues that the domestic code was presented by Christians as their defense. They wanted to let the Romans know that Christians live in family relationships which were defined as normal and proper by Greco-Roman culture. They hoped that thereby the pagan governors, husbands, and masters would look at those Christian converts differently, and would praise them for their proper household relationships, rather than criticizing them for rejecting the old gods.

The most noteworthy fact that we have learned in this chapter is that we are dealing with a paraenetic unit that has a long tradition, traced beyond Stoicism all the way back to Greek unwritten laws, especially in the form settled in Aristotle. This realization will help us to see, while we accept Yoder’s and Schroeder’s emphasis on specifically Christian motivations in the codes, that their shared theological convictions have led Yoder to rely too heavily on Schroeder to acknowledge the early church’s use of the existing schema. With this knowledge in mind, now we will turn to theological studies on the NT household codes, focusing on John Howard Yoder and Elisabeth Schüessler Fiorenza.
Chapter 2. Two Alternative Views on the *Haustafeln* in Theological Ethics

This chapter will deal with two alternative views on the *Haustafeln* in theological ethics. The view of John Howard Yoder in regards to the household codes is found in his essay, “Revolutionary Subordination,” in which he characterizes the stance of the church within society as voluntary subordination. His emphasis is on showing how radically the Stoic concept of living one’s given role within society was transformed in the codes by Jesus Christ’s servanthood manifested in his life, death, and resurrection. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza opposes Yoder’s view that the *Haustafeln* show Christians’ acceptance of subordination because it is fitting in the Lord. In her essay, “Discipleship and Patriarchy,” she detects in the codes Aristotelian ethics that are slightly Christianized but that still impose patriarchal submission on subordinate parties. She focuses on the destructive influence that they have exerted on women and on the community of co-equal discipleship. Both these essays have validity and problems. Before exploring each theologian’s views on the *Haustafeln*, it will be beneficial to see the opinion they share on the claim of neutrality in biblical interpretation. Both Yoder and Fiorenza reject such claim.

1. No Neutrality in Biblical Interpretation

In his inaugural address, “An Oration on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each,” which was first published in 1787, J. P. Gabler declares the appearance of biblical theology which is “pure and
unmixed,” distilled into the “certain and undoubted universal ideas.”¹ William Wrede also contends that both the results and method of New Testament theology are determined “solely by the nature of the historical object” because it is guided by “a pure disinterested concern for knowledge.”² These claims of objective scholarship of the New Testament theology are questioned by most biblical and systematic theologians now.

Regarding the assumption “that we can read the Bible from a disengaged, neutral, objective, and culture-free standpoint” as an erroneous one, Stanley J. Grenz maintains that “there is no neutral reading of Scripture.” He adds, “In the end, all our readings of the text remain our readings.”³ Referring to Hans Georg Gadamer, Ellen T. Charry points out,

[T]he hermeneutical task is not carried on in isolation from the historical, cultural, and individual history of the biblical interpreter. Exegesis is a mutual enterprise involving both interpreter and text in which each speaks and is spoken to.⁴

It is in line with Stanley Hauerwas’ claim that we cannot accord a final and definitive status to any one interpretation of the tradition that the canon mediates.⁵ For Hauerwas, there can be no community without a tradition and there can be no tradition, in turn,

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In order for a community to stay in continuity with its tradition, it requires the constant adjustment, i.e., the interpretation. Precisely because the Christian community always finds itself in search of the truth about the God of Israel and of Jesus Christ, interpretation of the Scripture should remain open to a new understanding, and it often means “the reappropriation of the tradition with a greater depth of understanding.”

Hauerwas’ situating of the intelligibility of the moral authority of Scripture in the existence of a community, which takes the biblical narratives central for its life and which is at work with continual reinterpretation of its tradition, is closely related with Yoder’s account that the Bible has authority in a believing community in which that authority is presupposed and which is constantly renewed through its actual operation. Yoder believes faithful theology requires constant revision and perpetual reform, because the “function of the Bible is to continue correctly to stand in judgment on our past failures to get the whole point” (Use, 120). The church needs to test itself without ceasing by “‘looping back’ to Jesus.”

The reason that faithful theology needs constant reform is that, even though we attempt to reach for the “most nearly original and therefore more valid statements” of the

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8 Ibid., 356, 357, and 360.  
7 Ibid., 360.  
8 John Howard Yoder, “The Use of the Bible in Theology,” The Use of the Bible in Theology/Evangelical Options, ed. Robert K. Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 120. Subsequent quotations from this work will be cited as (Use, 120) for example.  
9 Stanley Hauerwas and Alex Sider, “Introduction,” John Howard Yoder, Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2002), 24. Subsequent quotations from Yoder’s work will be cited as (Preface, 24) for example.
biblical narratives (Preface, 139),¹⁰ “it is theology all the way down.”¹¹ Yoder makes it clear that the New Testament already goes beyond the “original account” (Preface, 136).

Early on in the process in which what Jesus had said and done was first transmitted orally, everybody who passed them on to others did so “in the light of his or her own understanding,” with a considerable amount of sifting or interpreting involved in it. Gospel writers then selected the materials, chose a framework to put them in, and analyzed their whole recounting, “with some point of view in mind” (ibid., 61): thus, Yoder declares, each Gospel writer is “a theologian” (ibid., 77).

This dismissal of the claims of objective scholarship is furthered by feminist hermeneutics of the Bible. One of its characteristics is the strong awareness of and the emphasis on the “importance of the interpreter’s own biases in shaping the resultant interpretation.”¹² Feminist biblical scholars are acutely conscious of their own predispositions they bring to the interpretation of the biblical texts. Schüssler Fiorenza points out that any historiography and exegesis which is objectivist and value-neutral is not possible at all. The interpreter, she argues, always approaches the text with specific intentions, questions, and understanding of the issues related to the text. The mind of the interpreter is “not a tabula rasa.”¹³

¹⁰ Hauerwas and Sider worry about Yoder’s claim on the “core message” to which we “loop back,” because, when he writes about that, “he can invite the assumption that the core of the message itself was not already embedded in a rich theological matrix,” as they have concerns about Yoder’s understanding of “Biblical realism” and the notion of the “kernel.” (Ibid., 24-25).
¹¹ Ibid., 24.
¹³ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone: the Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 37. Her refutation of the objectivist claim will be dealt with more extensively in Section 3 of this chapter.
Mary Ann Tolbert vehemently refutes the convention which claims the
“objective,” normative, and authoritative scholarship, as something that “thoroughly
disguises the personal intentions and biases which actually inform the work.”14 She
names the conventional hermeneutics with no adjective – adjectives such as feminist,
womanist, mujerista, or Third World – as “patriarchal hermeneutics.”15 Opposed to the
androcentric scholarship which takes “man” as the “paradigmatic” human being – and
thus, which leaves women as “imperfect males” – Schüssler Fiorenza regards male
experience of truth as “one particular” perception of reality.16 These claims at least call us
to see the yet-to-be-completed state of the conventional hermeneutics.

What then can we do now with those aspects of Scripture that seem apparently
irrelevant and even “morally perverse” like the Haustafeln, as Hauerwas calls them?17
Are they codes that the ancient world mistakenly followed and that the contemporary
Christians find no reason to seriously take into account? Or, as Yoder maintains, do they
have validity in our lives as well? It is time to turn to Yoder’s account on “revolutionary
subordination.”

2. John Howard Yoder on the Haustafeln: Tradition from Jesus

The argument that Yoder primarily aims his criticism at in The Politics of Jesus is
the modern scholarly consensus, which questions Jesus’ relevance for social ethic and

14 Tolbert, 115.
15 Ibid., 118.
16 Schüssler Fiorenza (1984), 2.
which claims therefore that even the early church had to borrow its ethic from somewhere else. In the chapter “Revolutionary Subordination,” he focuses on attacking the conventional interpretation of the *Haustafeln*. Among the several traces in the New Testament of a particular type of ethical teaching called “household tables,” Yoder thinks that Col. 3:18-4:1 represents it “most purely” (*PJ*, 162). Following David Schroeder, Yoder regards the parallelism in these texts to be “explainable only by assuming that there was in the pre-literary life of the earliest churches a far-reaching commonality in the use of this pattern of moral instruction” (164 n. 2).

In Martin Dibelius (See pp. 25-28) – who contends that when the parousia was delayed, the young Christian movement found itself unable to adequately deal with its needs to establish itself within ordinary daily life in terms of the gospel, and that thus the *Haustafeln* clearly show the borrowings from the moral family principles of Greek philosophy and of Jewish ethical tradition – Yoder detects the classic statement which says that “the ethic derived from the meaning of Jesus was inadequate or irrelevant to meet the practical needs of the church” (165). Yoder translates and quotes Dibelius extensively:

> These collections of proverbs intend to define the duties of the several groups [i.e., categories of persons] in the household. Their existence in the early Christian writings testifies to the need of the young Christian movement to establish itself within ordinary daily life. This need is not self-evident; for that [particular kind of] Christianity which burst into the world and especially into the Hellenistic world (1 Thess. 1:9f) could apparently do without any basic attitude to the cultural

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18 The study of the *Haustafeln* and of the notion of subordination has been the most controversial one in Yoder’s study.

19 Citations from the book in this section will show only page numbers in parentheses.

20 Yoder believes that in the case of the *Haustafeln*, the borrowing must have come from Stoicism, rather than from the Jewish *halakah*.
communities of Family and Fatherland, as toward Culture itself. (Cf. Paul’s personal attitude to marriage, 1 Cor. 7:29ff.) Thus Christianity was unprepared for meeting these needs, or to say the least, could not adequately deal with them in terms of the gospel of Jesus. Resort to the moral instructions which Hellenistic and Jewish propaganda had developed was inevitable …. Thus early Christianity began, by a very gradual process, to come to grips with the World. The Haustafeln are especially fitting specimens of this process. They do show that Christian paraenese preserved for the common ethic of the West both the moral family principles of Greek popular philosophy and those of Jewish halakah.\footnote{Martin Dibelius, \textit{An Die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemon}, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 12 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1952), 48-49, recited from Yoder, \textit{PJ}, 164-65.}

Yoder shows in an earlier chapter, “Trial Balance,” that “the problem of the delay of the parousia is one that scholars have imported into the New Testament” (109). The understanding that the early Christians were disappointed at the failure of the kingdom of heaven to arrive as soon as they had been told by Jesus and that they had to come up with an ethic borrowed from the surrounding cultures which was contradictory to that of Jesus is problematic to him. Using A. Strobel’s study of this “problem” based on the Jewish understanding of Habakkuk 2, Yoder challenges the modern notion that the early church “must have been profoundly shaken by the non-arrival of the Messiah”:

The not-having-come and the having-come of the Rule of God were both present in the faith of each biblical epoch. The concept of a purely future coming, so firmly dated that at a certain time its failure to arrive becomes a clear disappointment, is foreign to the biblical mind. Thus the concept that the specific character of Jesus’ ethic was conditioned upon the imminence for him of a purely future end of human history is likewise unthinkable. (109)

He thus concludes that the moral exhortations in the household codes are not the product of the “failure of the kingdom to come” as a “makeshift substitute” (168-169).

Three implications that make it hard for Yoder to accept the idea of direct borrowing are: first, that it implies that nature, not revelation, and reason, not Jesus, are
sources of ethical organization. Second, that it suggests that one’s duties are ascertained by asking what one’s role in the society is. And third, that it says that by choosing the given structures of society over against the radicality of Jesus’ ethic, “the early church took on a position that was essentially conservative,” that it “chose not to challenge the subjugation of woman or the institution of slavery” (166). He clearly rejects Dibelius’ welcoming the idea of the early church’s “coming to grips with ‘the world’” or of its accepting the orders of creation by moving away from “the timeless radicality of Jesus” (167).

The first has to do with the main issue of the entire book, namely the claim that Jesus is not relevant for social ethics today. This book has been written to show what such a ready and easy dismissal of Jesus’ teaching and example leads us to: relying on “common sense and the nature of things” for the substance of ethics (8). He describes this way of ethical thinking as follows:

We will measure what is “fitting” and what is “adequate”; what is “relevant” and what is “effective.” We shall be “realistic” and “responsible.” All these slogans point to an epistemology for which the classic label is the theology of the natural: the nature of things is held to be adequately perceived in their bare givenness; the right is that which respects or tends toward the realization of the essentially given. … the structure of the argument is … : it is by studying the realities around us, not by hearing a proclamation from God, that we discern the right. (8-9)

It shows his criticism of the “theology of the natural” or the “ethic of natural law.” Later, when Yoder talks about the reciprocity in the Haustafeln being “a revolutionary trait,” he points this out again to make sure that the teaching of the household codes is far from reaffirming the creation order.
If this acceptance of the existing social order and the call to those who are subordinate to remain there were all that was said, then it might be correct when Lutheran tradition sees in these texts a reaffirmation of the creation order, which has about it the authority of revelation because God has made society thus. That same tradition could then also be right in concluding that the Christian social ethic must always be basically conservative because of the rootage of the present order in the divine imperative. But the *Haustafeln* do not consecrate the existing order when they call for the acceptance of subordination by the subordinate person; far more they relativize and undercut this order by then immediately turning the imperative around. (177-78)

The second implication of the idea of borrowing in the *Haustafeln* about which Yoder warns is closely related to the first: by viewing the acceptance of non-biblical sources for ethical guidance as “necessary, possible, and legitimate” (165-166), readers are kept from seeing the specifically Christian meaning in the New Testament texts. Rather than grasping the timeless radicality of Jesus in the teachings, the reader will see that “the *Haustafeln* are saying in effect that it is possible to ascertain one’s duties by finding out who one is, that is, by asking what is one’s role” (166). The third implication follows from it: that this idea of borrowing leads the reader to the conclusion that the position the early church took on was basically conservative, without challenging women’s subjugation or slavery as an institution. Yoder’s rejection of this idea is based on all three implications.

Another point of contention that Yoder advances has a close relation with the issue of borrowing: he is against the idea of placing a chasm between the ethic of Jesus and the ethic of the apostolic church, or of identifying a gap in the ethical thought between the Pauline gospel and the Petrine writings. He rejects the widespread view that
there is “a radical shift in ethical thought in the midst of the New Testament canon” (168 n. 13). The following is the argument that he refutes.

That there is in the midst of the canon a chasm separating the ethic of Jesus from that of the apostolic church, of such a nature that one must choose between the two. The reason for the church’s leaping over the chasm was the lack of any adequate moral equipment on Jesus’ side of the gap. (168)

It is part of the “substantial affirmation of the mainstream ethical consensus” which he seeks to challenge. According to this consensus,

Since … Jesus himself (either his teachings or his behavior) is not finally normative for ethics, there must be some kind of bridge or transition into another realm or into another mode of thought when we begin to think about ethics. This is not simply a bridge from the first century to the present, but from theology to ethics or from the existential to the institutional. A certain very moderate amount of freight can be carried across this bridge: perhaps a concept of absolute love or humility or faith or freedom. But the substance of ethics must be reconstructed on our side of the bridge. (8)

It reminds one of Paul Ramsey, for example, whose just war theory is centered upon the concept of Christian love for the neighbor, or Ernest C. Colwell, to whom Jesus’ temptation story “is a dramatic parable of humility, not a temptation” (6 n. 10). This mainstream ethical thinking claims Jesus’ mandate, while rejecting “the relevance of the concrete guidance of Jesus” (3 n. 4).

To Yoder, this “axiom of the chasm in the canon” (168 n. 12) is an imposition. Seeing that the early Christianity proved to be “a far cry from the kingdom [Jesus] had announced,” many modern interpreters have posited “a hiatus” between “the human Jesus’ proclaimed kingdom at Jerusalem” and “the worship of the heavenly Christ in the Gentile churches” (112). But Yoder blames the Hegelian philosophical assumptions of F. C. Baur for imposing “the polarity of Jesus and Paul” upon the 19th century New Testament
criticism (168) and for thus leading scholars to such a rapid and sweeping acceptance of the Stoic origin of the *Haustafeln*.\textsuperscript{22} Thus he negates the opinion that “the ethic of the apostles betrays that of Jesus” (187) or that “the witness of Jesus was lost sight of very soon in the development of the apostolic church” (188). Rather than finding “the systematic split” in the *Haustafeln* between “the ethic of stable society in the late teachings of Paul and the ethic of the immediate kingdom in Jesus,” as has been the systematic axiom of modern Protestant ethics, he finds there “an ethic that is derived … from the novelty of the teaching and the work and the triumph of Jesus” (179), the pattern of “creative transformation” (185) which has been accomplished in human relationships by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yoder suggests looking “more closely and respectfully at the instructions” themselves (169). He argues that the *Haustafeln* have only a vague similarity to Stoicism, namely that they call upon a person to fulfill his or her given role. He goes on to provide the factors which forbid us from explaining such a direct borrowing from a Stoic source. In this, he is in line with the biblical scholars who emphasize the specifically Christian character of the *Haustafeln*. His points are: (a) While the Stoic morality “addresses *man in his dignity* and calls upon him to live up to the highest vision of himself” (171),\textsuperscript{23} in the *Haustafeln*, the subordinate persons – the slaves, the children, and the wives – are addressed as moral agents, and addressed first. (b) While Stoicism calls a single person, a

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{22} As will be shown more clearly, this acceptance itself is not a problem, but ignoring the codes’ Christian meaning is. But for the codes’ actual origin, as Crouch and Balch have shown, we have to look further back before Stoicism. Concentrating on Stoicism weakens Yoder’s discussion.

\textsuperscript{23} Original emphasis. As Yoder acknowledges, the use of the gender-inclusive language would be inadequate in dealing with Stoicism, because the "maleness of the prototypical actor is the Stoic assumption" (176).
\end{footnotesize}
dominant man in society, to dignity and detachment according to reason and the nature of things, the *Haustafeln* speak in plural terms to “a whole group of persons, and not simply a meditative elite” (170) and call them to reciprocal and “willing subordination” to each other (172). (c) Lastly, when the Stoic ethic is sanctioned and motivated by “the self-evident appropriateness of giving in to the way things are and living up to what one is,” the instructions in the *Haustafeln* are “motivated and given substance by Christ’s giving himself for his church” (176).

Yoder accents these components: that the subordinate people in the social order are regarded and addressed as moral agents; that rather than taking their subordination for granted, imperatives to children, women, and slaves are directed to them; and that the call to subordination is reciprocal. These points have validity, especially when the wider context than Stoicism is considered. Even when these cases are found in earlier works outside Christian codes, they are rare occasions. For example, while Stoics do not directly address subordinate members, it is found in Platonic and Neo-Pythagorean literature. Some elements of reciprocity are found in Seneca/Hecaton (See p. 42) and in Philo (See p. 52). But these are not in the fullest form found in the *Haustafeln*. As Yoder points out, it is significant that the subordinate members of each pair are addressed first. He stresses that in the *Haustafeln* the husband/father/master is admonished to subordination to the weaker persons, too. But by qualifying the admonitions as “to a kind of subordination” (177), Yoder seems to acknowledge that the dominant person is not admonished to the

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24 Balch, 97 gives Timaeus, Iamblichus, Callirratidas, Perictione, Phintys, Bryson, Theano, Plutarch, and Porphyry as showing a tradition of ethical exhortation to wives.
same degree of subordination as the subordinate persons are called to. Nonetheless, he is right to emphasize the revolutionary character of this reciprocal call to subordination.

The sanction or motivation behind the admonitions, which is lacking in Stoicism, makes them even more notable. The “maximum clarity” of this motivation (176) is found in 1 Peter 2:18-23, which teaches the slave to accept the authority of even the unjust master, following the example of Christ. V. 23 reads, “When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.” Ephesians 5:25-33 also gives the husband the motivation to give himself for his wife: “just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (v. 25). Ephesians 5:21, “out of reverence for Christ,” and Colossians 3:18, “as is fitting in the Lord,” are other examples of “substantial arguments” that explain why the admonished actions are right. Yoder stresses that “Far from being a pagan borrowing, this call is shown by this usage to be rooted in the very center of the Christian’s confession and piety” (ibid.). On this ground, he rejects again the claim of borrowings, and insists that the household codes “arose within the original teaching of the apostles in the earliest common life of the Christian community” (177).

These arguments of Yoder’s are directed toward his contention that, contrary to what Dibelius, Troeltsch and others say about the Haustafeln, “this tradition comes from Jesus” (179). He stresses that rather than borrowing or failing to overcome his subordinationist thought, Paul “(or the church before him) created it [the duty of subordination] by the application to a universal human problem of the central theme of Christology: that Jesus’ suffering is the law of his disciples’ life” (175 n. 30). Yoder’s
arguments reflect his fundamental questions about the prevalent structures of ethical
thought that see Jesus “not finally normative for ethics” (8). He says in an earlier essay of
the book, “The Possibility of a Messianic Ethic”:

If the meaning of Jesus is this different from what he was understood by his
Palestinian disciples and adversaries to mean, and if those ordinary meanings
need to be filtered through a hermeneutic transposition and replaced by an ethic of
social survival and responsibility, what then has come of the concept of revelation?
Is there such a thing as a Christian ethic at all? If there be no specifically Christian
ethic but only natural human ethics as held to by Christians among others, does
this thoroughgoing abandon of particular substance apply to ethical truth only?
Why not to all other truth as well? (10)

This is about the Protestant liberalism that Hauerwas, with him, criticizes for
having been “deeply committed to the project of subjecting Christian discourse to the
criteria of modernity,”25 which turns our Christian faith “into a system of beliefs that can
be or is universally known without the conversion of being incorporated within a specific
community of people.”26 Hauerwas traces this “habit of mind” back to the Constantinian
era in his book, God, Medicine, and Suffering:

I think this habit of mind developed when Christianity became a civilizational
religion oriented to provide the ethos necessary to sustain an empire. Rather than
being a set of convictions about God’s work in Jesus Christ requiring conversion
and membership in a community, Christianity became that set of beliefs which
explains why the way things are is the way things were meant to be for any right-
thinking person, converted or not.27

Yoder indicates that his intention of the book is to let the New Testament
scholarship be freed from this “grid” of the twentieth-century “customary unthinking

25 Stanley Hauerwas, a class handout in his “CHE 213 Christian Ethics in America” class in the Spring,
2000, 33.
26 Stanley Hauerwas, God, Medicine, and Suffering (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans
27 Ibid., 55. Italics are mine.
assumptions about ethics,” which definitely includes what he calls “the contemporary
fashion of doctrinaire egalitarianism” of some feminists (PJ, 191). He is harsh in that
criticism:

What if, e.g., the sweeping, doctrinaire egalitarianism of our culture, which makes
the concept of “the place of [anyone]” seem either laughable or boorish, and
makes that of “subordination” seem insulting, should turn out really (in “the intent
of God,” or in long-run social experience) to be demonic, uncharitable,
destructive of personality, disrespectful of creation, or unworkable? Must we still
assume that in order properly to “play twentieth-century occidentals” we must let
this modern myth keep us from hearing what the apostle says about the
christological basis of mutual subordination? (174 n. 25)

The problem with the “grid from the present” (191) is that modernity, if it finds some
components of the scriptural heritage incongruous, simply screens them out, not
wrestling with them. It reflects the egocentrism of the modernity that “distorts the texts
one likes as well as the ones one doesn’t” (175), whose enterprise ends up being
adaptations and applications “which rather constitute betrayal” (Use, 110).28 He refutes
this practice of “our self-sufficiency” that makes “the present insight of the bearer” be the
“sovereign judge of any communication one will accept” (PJ, 175 n. 27). This will be
addressed further in Chapter 3 in relation to Schüssler Fiorenza’s claim on the authority
of women’s experiences of liberation over against that of the Scripture.

According to Yoder, Christians are the people who have been liberated from the
way things are, because “the givenness of our subjection to the enslaving or alienating
powers of this world is broken” through Jesus “who freely took upon himself the
bondages of history in our place” (185). Therefore, the Haustafeln are a good example of

28 John Howard Yoder, “The Use of the Bible in Theology,” The Use of the Bible in Theology/Evangelical
the voluntary subjection of the church that shows a renewed way to live within the present, in which the common patterns of the society are “Christianized” (184). Yoder, then, translates Johannes Hamel extensively as “a most penetrating statement” of the ethical thought expressed in the *Haustafeln* which is also found elsewhere in the New Testament. Hamel acknowledges that the instruction – “Let everyone be subordinate …” – has been seriously misunderstood and abused due to the failure to read it in the complete context. He traces this failure back to “our unbelief which has made out of the call to freedom and discipleship and the way of the cross an invitation to duck out of danger, to get out of the way, for the benefit of whatever group may be in power” (180 n. 40).29 But then, questions arise out of the way Yoder seeks to convince the reader of it.

Yoder detects the “revolutionary innovation” (171) in the ethical thinking that the proclamation of the kingdom of God brought about in the young church.

There must have been something in the experience of their becoming Christians, or in their education as new members of the Christian community, or in their experience in the life of that group, which had given these subjects a vision or a breath of a new kind of dignity and responsibility. This must already have occurred if they were tempted to rise above their station. Only if something in the life or the preaching of the church had given them the idea that their subordinate status had been challenged or changed would there be any temptation to the kind of unruliness to which these texts [the *Haustafeln*] are addressed. (173)30

He notes that there must have been “a temptation to insubordination” (175), occasioned by the report that “in Jesus’ messianity a new age had begun in which men and women alike are freed for obedience by the resurrection of the Crucified” (176). It is the first part

29 Yoder’s translation from Johannes Hamel, “Erwägungen zur urchristlichen Paraenese …” in Ernst Wolf (ed.), *Christusbekenntnis im Atomzeitalter? ThEx*, 70 (1959), 159-61.

30 It is an argument from silence, which is problematic.
of what he calls the “double movement,” which he explains as follows especially in relation to 1 Cor. 11:

[F]irst of the enfranchising impact of the gospel upon women, in that she may rise to speak and can function religiously as far more than simply a member of the household of her father or husband, and second of her acceptance of the order of society within which her role is to be lived out. (181)

According to Yoder’s explication of the “double movement,” the first movement is the liberating impact of the gospel upon women and the second is that they are admonished to accept the order of society along with their role within it. Christians are called to “subordination,” the willing and voluntary “acceptance of an order, as it exists, but with the new meaning given to it” (172).

As an example of the first movement, Yoder mentions Corinthian women’s gesture of throwing off the veiling in the worship service in 1 Cor. 11, and sees that Paul’s teaching of the retention of the veil represents the second movement. The main purpose that Yoder has when he mentions this section of the epistle is to show the presence of the structure of the ethical thought that is expressed in the Haustafeln in a wider scale of the New Testament. He finds in chapter 7 of the letter another teaching of the same import, in which Paul counsels the woman and the slave to remain in the social status they find themselves in: “in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God” (v. 24). Even though Yoder does not mention these other verses, v. 17 has already set the term, “However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you.” Again, in v. 20, Paul advises, “Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called.” Thus, the circumcised is counseled to
remain circumcised, the uncircumcised to remain uncircumcised, a slave a slave, a single person to remain single, a married woman to remain in her marriage.

Even with another set of instructions seemingly opposed to these – which asks the slave to avail himself of the opportunity for freedom (v. 21); which advises that, if one is strongly inclined toward marriage, one had better marry (v. 36); which allows the forsaken woman to remarry after her husband’s death (v. 39); and which urges not to “become slaves of human masters” (v. 23) – Yoder sees the concern of the apostle being in assisting Corinthians to stay “free from anxieties” (v. 32). It is because we live “in a world whose structures are impermanent, and not so important that we should concentrate our efforts upon changing our status with regard to them” (182). He has this view backed up by 1 Cor. 7:29-31, which he quotes early on in the book:

Let those who have wives live as though they had none,  
And those who mourn as though they were not mourning,  
Those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing,  
And those who buy as though they had no goods,  
And those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. (9)

From all this Yoder gets to the conclusion that Christians are called to freedom in Christ and that we should exercise more freedom when the opportunity is given. But what he adds after it is more significant in showing the actual direction his interpretation of the Haustafeln takes: “Yet that freedom can already become real within one’s present status by voluntarily accepting subordination, in view of the relative unimportance of such social distinctions when seen in the light of the coming fulfillment of God’s purposes” (182). Even though he accepts “Get free if you can” as the predominant understanding of 1 Cor. 7:21, he clearly prefers the opposite reading, “Even if a choice of liberation
should come, it is still better to make use of your servitude” (ibid. n. 41).\footnote{F. F. Bruce, 168, for example, favors the reading of “Get free if you can,” while Crouch, 125 opts for the reading of “Make use of your servitude.”} Yoder emphasizes the significance of the first of the double movement, “the first ‘liberating’ dimension” of the codes, identifying it in “the fact that the addresseees, underdogs in the culture, have been convinced by the gospel of their dignity, to the point that it is relevant to urge them to be patient” (172 n. 21).

However, is it enough to say that this party “has already been ascribed a worth that is fundamentally different from what any other society would have accorded” (181)? What has become of this radical impact that caused the unruliness? Why did it have to be suppressed right away? Why did it need to be suppressed in the first place, if it was such a significant thing to note? Why does Yoder not grieve over this immediate dilution? In the “Epilogue” of the essay, Yoder acknowledges that this essay has provoked enormous amount of angry objection from the readers. It is still the case in that it annoys, if not downright offends, a well-meaning reader, who is very much accustomed to the social rhetoric of egalitarianism and equality of human beings. Yoder’s contention regarding the Haustafel texts that there was “initially critical and empowering impact of the apostolic witness” (188) easily loses its force in face of the teachings of the canon that seemingly suffocate the original impact in their attempt to warn “against overdoing enfranchisement” (190).

Why did the apostles have to warn them? With Balch, some think they did it because they did not want Christians to “scandalize the surrounding society by flaunting
too visibly their freedom.” They see in 1 Peter the concern not to give occasion for persecution. Others think it was because of the “fear of disruption” inside the churches (189). And Schweizer understands that the early church’s initial acceptance of subordination was done “on missionary-tactical grounds” (190 n. 61). In the subsequent chapter (Chapter 10) of The Politics of Jesus, “Let Every Soul Be Subject: Romans 13 and the Authority of the State,” Yoder declares that Paul’s central purpose in Rom. 13:1-7 is to call the Christian Jews in Rome “away from any notion of revolution or insubordination” “in the face of official anti-Semitism and the rising arbitrariness of the Imperial regime” (202). It is not hard to see the connection that this statement has with the first view above. Yoder, on top of all these reasons, accentuates the christological motivation, namely that those Christians accepted the subordination because “it is fitting in the Lord” (187).

As I pointed out earlier (See p. 104), one is led to question the way Yoder reasons around the subversive impact of Christian conversion and the subsequent call to subordination. The aforementioned Chapter 10 of his book provides us with good grounds on which we can shape our questions on Yoder’s reasoning around the Haustafeln. Dealing with Rom. 12-13, he finds there in the text “the expression of this transformed life first in a new quality of relationships within the Christian community, and, with regard to enemies, the suffering” (196). Notice that he finds the transformed life after conversion, expressed first in “a new quality of relationships within the Christian community,” and second in the suffering with regard to their “enemies.” Then, when he understands the apostles as admonishing the Christians to subordinate
themselves to the household order of the society in the *Haustafeln*, why does he not differentiate their relationships to one another within the Christian community from those with the enemies? Is it because, as Balch pointed out, the apostles are mainly talking about the household in which wife, slaves, and children are converted but not the husband/master/father?

Our questioning goes on. In that chapter, in regard to the state, Yoder defines “subordination” as “the Christian form of rebellion,” as “the way we share in God’s patience with a system we basically reject” (200 n. 10). He further distinguishes subordination from “obedience,” which denotes “completely bending one’s will and one’s action to the desires of another” (209). That said, it is not clear if Yoder’s former claim is persuasive enough: that “the *Haustafeln* do not consecrate the existing order when they call for the acceptance of subordination by the subordinate person” because “far more they relativize and undercut this order by then immediately turning the imperative around” (177–78). Yoder mentions only the slaves, women, and children – the subordinate party – when he refers to Christians’ subordination as stemming from the subordination and humiliation that Jesus himself accepted (209). Give heed to the same problem in another occasion in which he talks about it.

*The wife or child or slave* who can accept subordination because “it is fitting in the Lord” has not forsaken the radicality of the call of Jesus; it is precisely this attitude toward the structures of this world, this freedom from needing to smash them since they are about to crumble anyway, which Jesus had been the first to teach and in his suffering to concretize. (187, emphasis added)

Where has his emphasis on the reciprocal character of the subordination between members of each pair gone? Is it not exactly the logic that they used when they preached
to the African American slaves to keep them in slavery? Where is the emphasis that is necessarily to be placed on “the radicality of the call of Jesus,” embodied by the Christians in the superordinate positions? How can the subordinate persons be reminded that they have been liberated by the gospel, in the context of the church which teaches them to remain in their subordinate positions without letting them witness any changes in their partners? The ultimate question that ought to be asked is this: Is Yoder not supposed to clearly name patriarchy as a sinful “system we basically reject,” before he ever ventures to assert that the revolutionary subordination is the very way in which Christians can participate in God’s patience?

Related to the question we just asked, we further want to ask why Yoder’s acceptance of the apostles’ warning against insubordination is so ready that it goes without any accusation of the tyranny of the patriarchal household ethos, unlike his eloquent explication of the Apostle Paul’s call in Rom. 13 – the call on the Jewish Christians away from any kind of notion of revolution or insubordination – that equates it with a call “to a nonresistant attitude toward a tyrannical government” (202, emphasis added). Why is the immediate dilution of the emancipatory vision in the early Christian household shown in these texts not attacked or lamented over by him as much as is the accommodation that the established church has made in the Christendom?32

32 He only feebly laments over “the ensuing loss of the empowering impact,” when he links it “to a waning of the vision of the cross as ethical, and of Jesus as Servant” in a footnote (PJ, 190, note 61).
Could Yoder ever say the same thing in regard to the *Haustafeln* that he says about the Christians’ subordination to the government? He talks about the notion of “subordination” which is different from “obedience”:

The conscientious objector who refuses to do what government demands, but still remains under the sovereignty of that government and accepts the penalties which it imposes, or the Christian who refuses to worship Caesar but still permits Caesar to put him or her to death, is being subordinate even though not obeying. (209)

Why does he not say, concerning the *Haustafeln* also, that being subordinate means that they become conscientious objectors who refuse to do what their patriarchs demand, but still remain under the sovereignty of that household and accept the penalties which it imposes, even death? Is this immediate, effective compromise of the Christian vision with patriarchy why John H. Elliott observes that the Christian family in the Greco-Roman society “posed no necessary threat to existing political institutions”?\(^{33}\)

Yoder acknowledges the prevalence of “the understanding that Paul’s teaching did in fact ratify uncritically the social structures of his time, and that Christians following his guidance today would do the same,” the understanding that is shared by both social conservatives and “would-be ‘revolutionaries’ who turn away from the New Testament for just this reason” (186 n. 50). Yoder himself denies that the *Haustafeln*’s call to subordination is “a simple ratification of the stratified society into which the gospel has come” (186). When he analyzes the strong reactions from the readers of his essay, he shows his understanding of this reality:

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The omnipresence of liberation as the preferred agenda of our age, colliding with the traditionally conservative use so often made of the *Haustafeln* in defense of patriarchal structures from the second century to the present, made it hard for readers to entertain the case made in this chapter for the initially critical and empowering impact of the apostolic witness. (188)

In the “Epilogue,” Yoder talks apparently more about the waning of the empowering impact of the gospel in the early history of Christianity. He agrees with Schüssler Fiorenza and Eduard Schweizer that the emancipatory vision of Jesus’ message was lost within a short time and that as a result the moral meaning of subordination was reversed. While the others regard that it is on a missionary-tactical ground that the subordination concepts were accepted initially, Yoder adds christological motivation to it. However, all of them see that as “the emancipatory thrust was diverted or spiritualized,” the initial adoption of subordination “yielded … to the reinforcement of the present order” (190 n. 61). Yoder contends that this reinforcement of the present order is far from the original meaning of the *Haustafeln*.

The one thing the *Haustafeln* cannot have meant originally is what they have mostly been used for since the second century, namely to reinforce extant authority structures as divinely willed for their own sake, by borrowing propatriarchal arguments either from a Stoic or a Jewish world vision, from an appeal either to creation or to nature. (190)

If Yoder declares that the *Haustafeln* could not originally mean reinforcing existing authority structures as divinely sanctioned, why do his readers find it hard to get his point? What causes their frustration and anger? One of the reasons that Yoder himself detects is the readers’ own modern ideology. The “autonomy of the independent individual” takes the center stage of the modern liberal vision, and it leads some readers to an “easy,” “a priori dismissal” which keeps them from getting the detail of his
argument (188). It is nothing new to him, since he expresses early on in the “Preface to the First Edition” of the book that its intention is partly to show that Jesus’ vision of the divine order can speak to our age, “if it can be unleashed from the bonds of inappropriate a priori” (xi).

Another reason Yoder finds for his readers’ frustration is their misapprehension of Paul. When they encounter those elements of Scripture which say “something that does not reinforce what [they] already believe” and “which seem out of step with contemporary convictions,” they simply excise them (174 n. 25). Because they do not intend to accept Paul’s subordination teaching, which seems against their modern conviction of egalitarianism and human equality, they lose patience to attend to “its fundamental revolutionary character” (173). Let alone those who simply mock or ignore the apostle, Yoder finds another approach to Scripture “supercilious,” the approach of those who think they should “excuse” or “understand” or “forgive” Paul for not having yet matured or attained the higher insights that are found in Gal. 3:28 and for retaining “the vestiges of the subordination idea” (174).

Yoder sees that the apostles, both Paul and Peter, share the Lord’s vision. He admits that the Haustafel passages are the site of the “collision between the liberating core of the Jesus message and the patriarchal assumptions of the cultures into which that message came” (189). However, he can advocate the apostles’ calling upon us to the participation in God’s patience, only after he explicitly names patriarchy one of the powers of creation which are clearly at odds with God’s intention. Even though he points out the first movement, Yoder moves on to the second in too hasty a manner,
endangering the necessary acknowledgement of the endurance of the original impact itself. The reason the second movement has significance in the life of Christians in this deeply sinful world is because the first unmistakably came to us through Jesus. Only when he stresses the subversive and enduring impact of the gospel appropriately, he can avoid making the Haustafel texts sound like an attempt to mitigate that impact.

I surmise that the Haustafeln are a strained case for him to push this resistance of “the basic axiom of borrowing and ‘Christianizing’ pagan principles” (167 n. 11), because it is quite clear from Crouch’s and Balch’s studies shown above that the material we find in the New Testament household codes had long been in use since Greek philosophy before it was taken up in the apostolic writings for a Christian use. The ground on which he decides to restrict his discussion to “the Stoic side of the alleged borrowing” is also shaky: his heavy reliance on Schroeder, who does not see the parallel between the Jewish ethical tradition and the Stoic one in terms of their literary and logical form. In refutation of Dibelius which is as complete as his dependence on Schroeder, Yoder overlooks the significance of the common material found in the Greek, the Stoic and the Hellenistic Jewish traditions. His comment – “They may also have been somewhat parallel in content, since any ethical teaching that reckons with social continuities must say some of the same things” (165 n. 6) – is quite inadequate. As we have seen in Chapter 1, the commonalities evidenced in moral teachings on household relations in the western culture throughout history are more than coincidental.

To further the discussion of this issue of borrowing, I claim that Yoder loses consistency near the end of the essay proper and in the “Epilogue.” At one point, he
argues that “The early church did not need to borrow from Stoicism the concept of living one’s own role” (187). Without using the term “borrowing,” he nonetheless admits the early church’s acceptance of the Stoic material at another point:

The pattern is thus uniformly one of creative transformation. The early Christians accepted the commonsense analysis of Stoicism that the ethical duties of the Christian could best be stated with reference to living up to the meaning of one’s role in society. Yet the meaning of that role was changed in its form by the encounter with the apodictic imperative style of Old Testament law [following Schroeder], and changed in substance by the stance of servanthood derived from the example and the teaching of Jesus himself. (185-186)

This explanation of different degrees of the Stoic influence on the content, the form and the substance of the teaching is not as effective in advancing his argument as he would want.

It is weakened even further in the “Epilogue,” when he comments on the most recent New Testament scholarly attention given to the Haustafeln, including studies of Crouch, Balch, and Schüssler Fiorenza. As he points out the specialists’ not very convincing attempts to disentangle the derivation of the Haustafeln substance from the environing cultures, he says,

Why should there not have been borrowings from all kinds of sources? Can we really disentangle three quite separate streams? What matters is how those borrowed materials were transformed as they were taken into the witness of the apostles. (189 n. 55)

It would be fair to say that his emphasis has moved from denial of the fact of the borrowing to the emphasis on the transformation of the material that was borrowed. I contend that he should have admitted the borrowing of the ethical material on the household relations from non-biblical sources, and should have emphasized their
transformation into specific Christian teachings in the apostolic writings, consistently from the beginning of his essay.

Yoder’s chapter on the *Haustafeln* constitutes an appropriate account of Christian relationships within society as “revolutionary subordination,” but in the process it is seen to fail to name patriarchy as one of “the rebellious powers of creation” (209) and as “a system we basically reject” (200 n. 10). Now we will turn to Schüssler Fiorenza’s criticism of Yoder’s study to see if we can gain any tools to read the New Testament texts on the household codes more fully.

3. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s Critique of Yoder’s Study

The contentment that Yoder displays in contending for the rightful source of the *Haustafeln* gives rise to suspicion on the part of Schüssler Fiorenza that his view justifies the discrimination and oppression that the given tradition has long represented. She focuses rather on the detrimental impact that it had and still has in the lives of Christian women and “nonpersons” (*DOE*, 372).\(^3^4\) This section admits the validity of her concerns, which underscore my criticism of Yoder’s essay. However, problems that her theology entails will be duly noted in the next chapter. Following Lührmann, Balch, and Elliott, whose contention is that the *Haustafel* texts involve the Aristotelian philosophical ideas about household management and political ethics, she names those texts “patterns of

patriarchal submission” (Discipleship, 141)\(^{35}\) and “a christianized form of Aristotelian ethics” (ibid., 165). Her book, In Memory of Her, builds on historical critical studies to show

that the so-called household code texts are prescriptive injunctions that advocate the neo-Aristotelian patri/kyriarchal pattern of domination/submission. These texts stand in tension, I argue, with the egalitarian ethos proclaimed in the pre-Pauline baptismal formula Gal 3:28. For that reason, the socio-political tension between the ethos of hegemonic kyriarchal Greco-Roman patriarchy and the inclusive egalitarian ethos determines early Christian discourses, just as it determined those of Greco-Roman antiquity. (IMH, xxviii)\(^{36}\)

To Schüssler Fiorenza, the Haustafeln cannot be relegated to “culturally conditioned Biblical traditions no longer valid today” because they still have the authoritative and oppressive impact in the lives of Christian women (Discipleship, 159). She agrees with Elizabeth Cady Stanton that the Bible is not “neutral,” but “a political weapon” against women’s struggle for liberation, and that the biblical interpretation is “a political act” (IMH, 7). In an earlier essay that she published in 1980, she declares:

As in the last century so also today the Bible is used against the movement for the equality of women in society and the churches. Whenever women protest against the political discrimination and civil degradation of women; or whenever we argue against the inequality in the churches, we are referred to the Bible, where – we are told – the subordination of women was divinely revealed and ordained: woman was created after man, she brought death and sin into the world, she is not the image of God, and therefore she has to be submissive and to work her

\(^{35}\) Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1982), “Discipleship and Patriarchy: Early Christian Ethos and Christian Ethics in a Feminist Theological Perspective,” 141. Subsequent quotations from the essay will be cited as (Discipleship, 141), for example.

\(^{36}\) Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Introduction to the Tenth Anniversary Edition: Remember the Struggle,” In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, Tenth Anniversary Edition (New York: Crossroad, 1994), xxviii. “Kyriarchy” is her coinage and she defines it as “a social-political system of domination and subordination that is based on the power and rule of the lord/master/father” (xix). Subsequent quotations from the book will be cited as (IMH, xxviii), for example.
salvation by bearing children, but not by teaching and having authority over men. (Roots, 87-88)\(^{37}\)

It reminds one of Pamela Cooper-White’s six stereotype-bearing myths about women in the Western culture that were mentioned earlier (See p. 17 n. 51). Listen to Cady Stanton in the preface of *The Woman’s Bible*, Part II:

> The Old Testament makes woman a mere after-thought in creation; the author of evil; cursed in her maternity; a subject in marriage; and all female life, animal and human, unclean. The Church in all ages has taught these doctrines and acted on them, claiming divine authority therefor. “As Christ is the head of the Church, so is man the head of woman.” This idea of woman’s subordination is reiterated times without number, from Genesis to Revelations; and this is the basis of all church action.\(^{38}\)

Since the inauguration of the women’s movement, feminists have maintained that the Bible is “inherently sexist, and thereby destructive of women’s consciousness” (Toward, 102)\(^{39}\) and have rejected religion wholesale (Discipleship, 136). While agreeing with Cady Stanton on the observation that the Bible is patriarchal and sexist, Schüssler Fiorenza maintains that since the biblical religion is still influential in the lives of women today, feminist endeavors have to take it into account. The postbiblical feminist stance that completely disregards the biblical religion, she argues, “is in danger of becoming ahistorical and apolitical,” because it ignores women’s authentic history and heritage within it and because it does not do justice to the positive impact that biblical religion has

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exerted to contemporary women (IMH, xlviii-xl ix). To her, there are only two options – either transforming biblical history and religion into a new liberating future or continuing to be subject to its patriarchal tyranny (Discipleship, 156) – and the first is definitely her choice.

Unlike the postbiblical feminists, Schüssler Fiorenza acknowledges the “double legacy” of the Bible and its interpretations being the source both for liberation and for oppression of women, being the resource both for “solving moral problems and generating moral challenges” and for “legitimizing dehumanization and violence” (ibid., 133). As the “life-giving” (ibid.) effect of biblical traditions, she recognizes the Bible’s transmission of “theological visions and values of human dignity, community, and well-being that have fueled movements for freedom and justice throughout Christian history” (BSS, 179). On the other hand, “the dehumanizing ideas and oppressive structures of Euro-American societies and cultures” (ibid.) count as “death-dealing” effect of the Bible, the appeal to which “has authorized, for example, persecution of Jews, burning of witches, torture of heretics, national wars of Europe, the subhuman conditions of American slavery, and the anti-social politics of the Moral Majority” (Discipleship, 133).

Then how does she seek to reclaim the Bible and its traditions for women’s struggle for liberation? She proposes a development of biblical studies that do not assume “that all Biblical tradition and texts have the authority of Scripture … merely by reason of their inclusion in the canon” (ibid., 137). It reflects Cady Stanton’s argument that “the

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40 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 179. Subsequent quotations from the book will be cited as (BSS, 179), for example.
Bible cannot be accepted or rejected as a whole,” since “its teachings are varied and its lessons differ widely from each other.” What is the basis of this selectivity? Schüssler Fiorenza’s self-positioning in the “advocacy” scholarship accounts for it, over against “so-called value-neutral scientific investigation” (IMH, 3). She declares that “All historiography is selective view of the past” (ibid., xlvi). Therefore, “the concept of objective science is itself a rhetorical construct” (ibid., xxiv) and “a value-free, objectivistic historiography is a scholarly fiction” (Interpreting, 40).

She detects “underlying theoretical frames and political implications” behind “universal truth claims” of historical studies (IMH, xxvii). When historical evidence becomes available, historians discuss it within a certain frame of reference, which involves their own philosophical perspectives and values, their own presuppositions and rhetorical perspectives, and their own political allegiance and preconceived bias and function (ibid., xlvii). She quotes James Robinson who mentions reciprocity of the humanities in general and of New Testament scholarship in particular as modern science which reflect as well as mold the modern understanding of reality.

Every scholar or scientist who deals with a subject matter from the past does so in terms of his present grasp of reality and the results of his research in turn flow into the current body of knowledge from which the continual modification of our understanding of reality emerges.

Schüssler Fiorenza sees the same principle at work in the history of early Christianity. She says, “the history of Christian beginnings, like all historical accounts, is ideological in that it not only shapes historical discourse but is also shaped by the discourses of its own social location and cultural-religious perspectivity” (IMH, xxvi). It is also in line with Robert McAfee Brown who observes, “What we see depends on where we are standing.”

Thus, she challenges the tacit assumption “that scholars who do not reflect or articulate their political allegiances are ‘objective,’ free from bias, nonpartisan and scientific” (IMH, xlvi). To her, “complete detachment or value-neutrality” is impossible (Toward, 100).

Claiming scientific accuracy and status for their own interpretations allows scholars and journalists both to remain silent about the ethico-political premises and interests of their own work and to conceal the ideological and disciplinary pressures of those scholarly or popular interpretive communities for whom they write. (IMH, xxv)

Therefore, Schüssler Fiorenza urges all theologians and biblical interpreters to account for their own position. It should even be made “mandatory” that “all scholars explicitly discuss their own presuppositions, allegiances, and functions within a theological-political context” (Toward, 109). Having this rejection of the claim of objective, value-neutral scholarship common among them, feminist scholars have identified their own biases at the outset of their works and have “underscored the gendered ideological character of their theoretical concepts and scientific modes of investigation” (IMH, xxvii).

See Schüssler Fiorenza’s identification of her own cultural, theological, and scholarly methodological location.

Obviously my perspective is conditioned and limited by my sociotheological location in the North American and European academy. I speak from within the women’s movement in the churches, especially in the Roman Catholic Church. Conscious of my particular and limited perspective, I dare not directly address the situation of Latin American women and the contributions they make to theology. Nonetheless, I do hope that some elements of my analysis will speak to your own experience and situation. Although I speak here as a woman, the only woman speaker in fact, I do not intend to speak about the woman’s question. Instead, I will focus on what a feminist liberation theological analysis can contribute to the articulation of a Catholic theology that is able to participate in creating a “Spirit-Center” for the global village. (DOE, 356)

It is part of her lecture given at a symposium on “The Function of Theology in the Future of Latin America” sponsored by the theology department of the Jesuit Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City in 1991. It not only is a good example of the feminist practice of making their presuppositions and allegiances explicit to the readers/audience, but it can also serve as a good entry point to discuss their conscious efforts to seek “a multifaceted heuristic theoretical model” that will replace the “dualistic, binary conception of patriarchy” (IMH, xviii-xix).

This latter issue has to do with the contradiction in the mainstream feminist discourse pointed out by socialist-marxist feminists and Third World feminists. Especially women of color have consistently problematized the “essentialist Western feminist discourse of universal generic Woman” (DOE, 360) from the white elite European-American women’s point of view. Rather than articulating women’s oppression in terms of the binary language of sex/gender, these groups have insisted that it should be defined by the complex interrelationship of sex, gender, race, class, ethnicity,
colonialism, religion, and culture. They have argued that “women are oppressed not only by sexism but also by racism, classism, colonialism” (BSS, 114), etc. This “multiplicative interstructuring of the systems of oppression” is effectively expressed by Deborah K. King: “Simultaneous oppressions are not just multiple but multiplicative: racism is multiplied by sexism multiplied by ageism, multiplied by classism multiplied by colonial exploitation” (DOE, 361).45

A striking example of this prejudiced feminist idea that “claimed democracy, equality, and freedom as the property of the superior races of western European civilization” is found in Elizabeth Cady Stanton (BNS, 177).46 Schüssler Fiorenza recalls it.

Like other Anglo-Saxon suffragists and social reformers Elizabeth Cady Stanton was very much determined and limited by her social status and class position. Not only did she express anti-immigrant sentiment by arguing for the suffrage of her own class because it would increase the numbers of Anglo-Saxon voters, she also appealed to ethnic and racial prejudices when she exhorted: “American women of wealth and refinement, if you do not wish the lower orders of Chinese, Africans, Germans, and Irish, with their low ideas of womanhood to make laws for you, demand that woman, too, shall be represented in the government.” (Ibid., 218 n. 63)47

Thus, challenging the essentialism of the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, which assumed the universal female identity and often reflected the upper-middle-class white

46 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 177. Subsequent quotations from the book will be cited as (BNS, 177), for example.
women’s interests, Schüssler Fiorenza seeks multifaceted, heuristic language for the struggle for women’s liberation that respects the diverse goals and values of different groups of women. And it has led her to opt for the term “kyriarchy” rather than “patriarchy,” because the former is an overarching term for the multiplicatively interstructuring of oppressions (IMH, xxix).

Positioning her inquiry within “a rhetorical paradigm of historiography,” Schüssler Fiorenza seeks “to undo the ideological constructions of the kyriocentric text” (ibid., xxv). Over against the “ethos of objective aperspectivity” (ibid., xxiv), she claims the advocacy scholarship and the “critical partiality of liberation theologies” (Toward, 92), which is grounded on the observation “that biblical and theological interpretation has always taken an advocacy position without clearly reflecting upon it. Such an advocacy position is not unique to liberation theologies” (ibid., 95). She detects a shift in interpretative paradigms in the debate between feminist “engaged” and androcentric academic “neutral” scholarship (IMH, l). Aided by Thomas Kuhn, she delineates a paradigm as follows.

A paradigm represents a coherent research tradition created and sustained by a scientific community. A paradigm defines the type of problems to be researched, interpretations to be given, and interpretative systems to be constructed. Thus a scientific paradigm determines all aspects of scientific research: observations, theories and interpretative models, research traditions and exemplars, as well as the philosophical-theoretical assumptions about the nature of the world and its total world view. All data and recorded observations are theory laden, no bare uninterpreted data and sources exist. Equally there are no criteria and research models that are not dependent on the scientific paradigm in which they were developed. (Ibid., li)
Paradigms determine the way scholars see the world and the theoretical model they use to interpret and find solutions to the conceived questions. Therefore, Schüssler Fiorenza sees in a shift from an androcentric to a feminist paradigm nothing other than “a transformation of the scientific imagination,” “an intellectual conversion,” and a significant “shift in commitment” (ibid.). When we regard that for her, “feminist studies are … primarily accountable to the women’s movement for societal-ecclesial change rather than to the academy” (ibid., lii), it is not an overstatement that through her feminist theological discourse she seeks that transformation, conversion and commitment shift in readers. It also explains why her studies are concentrated on the way the philosophical-systematic or the historic-critical mode of inquiry contributes to the actual liberation struggle of women and other subordinated people.

Feminist theory sees that all texts, including the Bible and those of biblical interpretation, are “products of an androcentric patriarchal culture and history” (ibid., xlv). Because she understands both the biblical writing and biblical interpretation as “selective activities” done by “the historical winners” (Discipleship, 132-133), she differentiates the passages/traditions in the Bible that have the validity for women’s struggle for liberation from those that do not. As examples of key passages that have had formative historical impact on the church’s moral discourse on women’s role and dignity, Schüssler Fiorenza takes up Gal. 3:28, stories of women prophets in the Old and New Testaments, and stories of Mary and Martha or of the woman at the well. On the other hand, Gen. 2 and 3 and the Haustafel passages are called key texts for “the moral-theological justification of the patriarchal limitation and repression of women’s leadership and roles” (ibid., 135).
We should note that the “Scriptural trajectory of Haustafeln (household codes)” that she defines includes a wide range of texts: not only Col. 3:18–4:1, Eph. 5:22–6:9, and 1 Pet. 2:18-3:7, but also 1 Tim. 2:11-15, 5:3-8, 6:1-2, Tit. 2:2-10, 3:1-2, 1 Clem. 21:6-8, Ign. Pol. 4:1-6:2, Pol. 4:2-6:1, Did. 4:9-11, and Barn. 19:5-7 (ibid., 139). Early on in her analysis of these texts, she locates their central interests “in the enforcement of the submission and obedience of the socially weaker group – wives, slaves, and children – on the one hand, and in the authority of the head of the household, the pater familias, on the other hand” (ibid.).

What stands out clearly from the very beginning is that she finds the reciprocity of subordination between the two groups not meaningful at all, contrary to Yoder’s reading of those texts. What she sees there instead is the reversal of the gospel impact. The Haustafel texts take over the Greco-Roman ethic of the patriarchal household code and they “spiritualize and moralize the baptismal community understanding expressed in Gal. 3:28” (*IMH*, 253). Because they reinforce the patriarchal submission of wives, slaves, and children,

the early Christian ethos of co-equal discipleship loses its capacity to structurally transform the patriarchal order of family and state. And adapting the Christian community to its patriarchal society, the Haustafel ethos opens up the community to political cooptation by the Roman empire. (*Discipleship*, 148)

The Colossians Haustafel, for example, which Schüssler Fiorenza sees as “the first and most precise form of the domestic code in the New Testament” (*IMH*, 253), shows “how a so-called ‘enthusiastic’ realized eschatological perspective can produce an insistence on

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48 The inclusion of the latter texts must have added to her criticism of the trajectory.
patriarchal behavior as well as an acceptance of the established political-social status quo of inequality and exploitation in the name of Jesus Christ” (ibid., 254).

The same is true in the case of the household code in 1 Peter. In face of the pagan attacks against Christians on suspicion of political subversion and of threatening the order and stability of the patriarchal household and society, Christian slaves and wives are exhorted to be submissive to their masters/husbands with a view to proving that their slanders are unjustified. The problem is, Schüssler Fiorenza says, that “in so doing the author ‘spiritualizes’ or ‘internalizes’ the Christian calling as a purely religious calling that does not disrupt the established order of the house and state” (ibid., 266). Likewise, the Ephesians household code theologizes and thereby reinforces the cultural-social structures of domination (ibid., 270).

Schüssler Fiorenza identifies three types of contemporary theological evaluations of the Haustafeln – necessary adaptation, goodness of creation, and subversive subordination – and sees all three as proposing “justification for the Christian character of this early Christian pattern of patriarchal submission” (Discipleship, 149). The “Necessary Adaptation” argument tells us that for the survival in a patriarchal culture, the church needed to adapt its ethos and structures to the Greco-Roman society. This view shares the observation that the early church saw a transition “from charism to office, from Paulinism to early Catholicism, from a millenarian radical ethos to a privileged Christian establishment, from the egalitarian structures of the beginnings to the hierarchical order of the Constantinian church” (ibid., 150).
The disappearance of imminent eschatological expectations is regarded as providing the impetus to the transition. Schüessler Fiorenza names Georg Strecker and Siegfried Schulz as proponents of this view (ibid., 170, n. 36), but one can add Martin Dibelius to this group because he shares the view on the result of the delayed parousia. The argument that the reinforcement of the patriarchal order in Christian households and the ecclesial patriarchalization of the house-churches were inevitable for Christian communities’ growth, development, and viability, is rejected by Schüssler Fiorenza. Rather, this theological justification stems from the misunderstanding that institutions are inherently patriarchal.

The second type of justification, “The Goodness of Creation,” reflects the view of some interpreters, especially German Lutherans, who argue that the New Testament household code injunctions affirm the goodness of creation, marriage and family. According to them, the Haustafel trajectory offered “a social alternative to an unworldly, ascetic ethos that engendered flight from the world and withdrawal from society and cultured life” (ibid., 151). Schüssler Fiorenza criticizes this theological evaluation, since it “overlooks the fact that in speaking about the goodness of the world, marriage and creation, it ascribes such goodness to oppressive patriarchal societal and ecclesial structures” (ibid., 152).

Her rejection of both the first and second types of theological evaluations of the Haustafeln is shared by Yoder. Especially concerning “the goodness of creation” argument, he makes extra efforts to distance his reading of the texts from it. The “theology of the natural” (PJ, 8) of certain Lutheran circles, whose view he summarizes
as “Whatever is, is the will of God. When we see what exists, we know thereby what God desires us to do” (ibid., 199), is found problematic. It has to do with Yoder’s emphasis on “Jesus’ rejection of the status quo” (ibid., 44). Far from being an affirmation of the status quo, the proclamation that Christ is Lord is “a social, political, structural fact which constitutes a challenge to the Powers” (ibid., 157).

However, Yoder’s reading of the Haustafeln is categorized by Schüssler Fiorenza as the third type of the theological evaluation of those texts that she criticizes by naming it “Subversive Subordination.” Actually, Yoder is the main target of her criticism of this type of apologetic argument. Together with the first two types, it is regarded as seeking “to justify the Haustafel’s patriarchal ethics on theological grounds” (Discipleship, 152). Understandably, she critically points out Yoder’s arguments on the revolutionary subordination that seem to advocate “the acceptance of an order as it exists” (PJ, 175), or “acceptance of the order of society within which [a woman’s] role is to be lived out” (ibid., 185). Especially the parts of his essay, which show that he is not totally sympathetic to the contemporary egalitarian or the civil rights and women’s liberation rhetoric, are severely attacked.

Schüssler Fiorenza’s questioning finds the reader’s assent, the questioning of Yoder’s idea that women’s and slaves’ duty of subordination in the Greco-Roman society or any society before modern times was so culturally accepted that it was not taught at all. For example, when he refutes the common misunderstanding of Paul, he argues:

The idea that Paul had “retained a vestige” of subordinationist thought is false also at the point of its assumption that the duty of subordination ever was being taught. Slaves and women were kept subject by superior power and by the
absence of alternatives, not by moral teaching. … moral teaching was not addressed to subordinate people. (Ibid., 175 n. 30)

He regards that it was so “taken for granted” that it did not leave “any other choice in that society” (ibid., 173). But as Aristotle’s criticism of the “license of the Lacedaemonian women” shows, there were times that saw different relations between men and women from the traditional notion of women’s subjection to men.

Aristotle indicates the inappropriateness of women’s rule over men in *Politics* I.1269b 13-1270a 14:

> Again, the license of the Lacedaemonian women defeats the intention of the Spartan constitution, and is adverse to the happiness of the state. For, a husband and a wife being each a part of every family, the state may be considered as about equally divided into men and women; and, therefore, in those states in which the condition of the women is bad, half the city may be regarded as having no laws. And this is what has actually happened at Sparta; the legislator wanted to make the whole state hardy, and he has carried out his intention in the case of the men, but he has neglected the women, who live in every sort of intemperance and luxury. … the citizens fall under the dominion of their wives … many things were managed by their women. … the influence of the Lacedaemonian women has been most mischievous. … This license of the Lacedaemonian women existed from the earliest times, and was only what might be expected. … But, when Lycurgus, as tradition says, wanted to bring the women under his laws, they resisted, and he gave up the attempt. … the disorder of the women, as I have already said, not only gives an air of indecorum to the constitution considered in itself, but tends in a measure to foster avarice. 49

He also acknowledges that there are some people in his own society who are of the opinion that the distinction between masters and slaves is “not by nature,” as seen in *Politics* I.1253b 20-22. They see that “all slavery” is “a violation of nature” (*Politics* I.1254a 19).

To Schüssler Fiorenza, Yoder’s theological assertion that “subordination means the acceptance of an order as it exists, but with the new meaning given to it by the fact that one’s acceptance of it is willing and meaningfully motivated” (PJ, 175) is based on a mistaken presupposition “that Greco-Roman ethics did not address the role of subordinate persons in the social and moral order” (Discipleship, 152). She keeps reminding us how thoroughly the subordinationist rhetoric has been reinforced through teachings, texts and their interpretation. In addition to Aristotle’s description of women’s influence at Sparta, Balch’s contention that the strong reaction to the pagan religion had everything to do with the challenge that the conversion of women and slaves had posed on the status quo shows the culture’s uneasiness about the ever-present threat of unruliness of the weaker party. The actual impetus behind the typical slander against the licentiousness of women who converted to the cult of Cybele, Dionysus, or Christianity, was that they divided the household by refusing to worship the gods of their fathers and ancestors.

Furthermore, Schüssler Fiorenza underlines the emancipatory societal tendencies in the first century. She points out the fact that, alongside of the dominant patriarchal ethos of Greco-Roman society, there were the more egalitarian aspirations, too. Using Klaus Thraede’s contention that the nature and role behavior of women was the topic of a lively public discussion in the first century, she emphasizes the greater economic and civil independence that was allowed to women by a general economic development and cultural mood. This development of a more emancipative social climate in Roman society naturally caused educated men to reflect on the nature and role of women. Schüssler
Fiorenza’s conviction about this patriarchal reaction to the egalitarian aspirations is extended to her observation of the recent scholarship on the household code trajectory: “It is significant that in the past ten years or so scholarly interest and investigation of these texts has increased precisely at the time when the women’s movement in the churches has developed momentum and urgency” (ibid., 138).

Her analysis of Yoder’s reading of the *Haustafeln* reinforces her conviction, because his “social-ethical approach of Barthian theology,” his “Subversive Subordination” argument is seen, just as “Necessary Adaptation” and “the Goodness of Creation” arguments are, to be “prepared to justify on theological grounds the historical and contemporary discrimination and oppression of those whose ‘nature’ predisposes them to be ‘ruled’ in patriarchal structures” (ibid., 154). Despite “Jesus’ rejection of the status quo” underlined by Yoder, which was mentioned above, Schüssler Fiorenza sees Yoder’s approach as legitimizing “the pattern of patriarchal submission as religious motivation for accepting the status quo of patriarchal social structures” (ibid., 155, original emphasis). All three arguments are accused of affirming “the patriarchal character of Biblical revelation and of the Christian church” and of documenting “the ideological function of Biblical theology and ethics” (ibid.).

Schüssler Fiorenza concludes that “Necessary Adaptation,” “the Goodness of Creation,” and “Subversive Subordination” approaches all confirm the claim of the post-biblical feminists that “Christian theology and church are inherently sexist” (ibid.). Treated that way, Yoder’s approach does not fare any better than the other two:
Thus Yoder defends the New Testament pattern of patriarchal submission because it motivates Christian slaves and women to accept “things as they are.” He maintains that we today must advocate it because its injunctions are out of step with contemporary convictions “present ever since the age of Lincoln but propagated still more sweepingly with the currency of civil rights and women’s liberation rhetoric.” (Ibid., 154)

To Schüssler Fiorenza, his reading is just one of male scholars’ usual patriarchal reactions to women’s movement. The appropriateness of this observation will be questioned and discussed in depth in the next two chapters. Before we move on, it would be a due procedure to understand Schüssler Fiorenza’s approach, “a feminist evaluative hermeneutics of the Bible,” which she identifies as her own over against the three androcentric justifications of the *Haustafel* texts, and to see how it affects her reading of them.

While she shares with other feminists the recognition that “androcentric language and patriarchal traditions have erased women from history and made them ‘non-beings’” (ibid., 155), she distinguishes herself from post-biblical feminists and neo-orthodox feminists. First, she disagrees with post-biblical feminists who argue that feminists should not waste their time trying to find the legitimacy of feminist vision and praxis in the Christian past and the Bible, but should “leave behind Biblical religion and reject the authority of the Bible because of its androcentric patriarchal character” (ibid.). She emphasizes that women still derive the positive self-identity and vision from Biblical religion, and that therefore Biblical religion and its continuing impact on culture should be acknowledged and dealt with in a constructive way. In fact, transforming “Biblical
history and religion into a new liberating future” is the only way to free women and all
oppressed people from their subjection “to its patriarchal tyranny” (ibid., 156).

Second, her feminist critical evaluative hermeneutics of liberation differs from a
neo-orthodox feminist hermeneutics. Most importantly, the latter derives the “canon” of
feminist Christian faith and ethos from the Bible, while the former derives its canon from
“the struggle of women and other oppressed people for liberation from patriarchal
structures” (ibid., 161). Schüssler Fiorenza’s approach, therefore, begins with women’s
own experience and vision of liberation as its primary source, not with the Bible, which is
one of the issues that will be dealt with in the next chapter. To her, neo-orthodox
feminists’ attempts to isolate the “liberating impulses of Biblical vision from its
oppressive aspects” end up being a feminist Biblical “apologetics”: whether it is Letty
Russell’s attempt to distinguish “between historically limited patriarchal traditions and
the liberating Biblical Tradition” or Phyllis Trible’s “between the liberative essence of
the revealed Text and its historical patriarchal-cultural expression” or Rosemary
Ruether’s “between the liberating prophetic critique and the Bible’s historical-cultural
deformations” (ibid., 159).

Schüssler Fiorenza emphasizes that the Haustafel trajectory cannot be relegated to
culturally-conditioned biblical traditions that are no longer valid today, because these
texts still have the authoritative and oppressive impact in the lives of Christian women.
Instead, she seeks to analyze carefully “the particular roots and historical structures of
women’s oppression and struggles for liberation in patriarchal Biblical history and
religion” (ibid.) and to “articulate a ‘dangerous memory’ (J. B. Metz)” (DOE, 358) that
reclaims the “foremothers’ and foresisters’ sufferings and struggles in and through the subversive power of the critically remembered past” (Discipleship, 158-159). She contends, “Such a ‘subversive memory’ not only keeps alive the suffering and hopes of Christian women in the past but also allows for a universal solidarity of sisterhood with all women of the past, present, and future who follow the same vision” (IMH, 31).

What surface as “dangerous memory” in “a critical radical democratic reading of the Jesus traditions” are traces of the discipleship of equals, which are found in the New Testament including the Pauline letters (SHW, 116). Christian feminism’s “magna charta” (Toward, 108) – epitomizes the early Christian vision of the discipleship of equals, which was “an alternative vision and praxis to that of the dominant society and religion” provided by the Christian missionary movements (IMH, 251). Schüssler Fiorenza explains what this vision was like when it was practiced in the house church, and evaluates the household codes in relation to it:

The early Christian missionary movements … rejected the religious and social status distinctions and privileges between Jews and Greeks, women and men, slave and free women and free men, and … understood themselves to be called to freedom. Their equality in the Spirit is expressed in alternating leadership and partnership, in equal access for everyone, Greeks, Jews, Barbarians, slaves, free, rich, poor women and men. Therefore, the proper name for this movement is ekklēsia, the full decision-making assembly of free citizens who are alien residents in their patriarchal societies and who constitute a different third “race.” The so-called household code injunctions to patriarchal submission can only be understood when they are seen as rhetorical statements seeking to adapt the egalitarian and therefore subversive Christian movement to its Greco-Roman patriarchal society and culture. (DOE, 372)

So, to Schüssler Fiorenza, the *Haustafeln* represent a reversal in terms of the gospel’s stride toward the actualization of the discipleship of equals. They demand the subordination of the wife to the husband by upholding the patriarchal family order of the time. She denies the specifically Christian character of their rules of conduct for women, children, and slaves, but declares that they “are a part of the Jewish and Greco-Roman culture of the time” (*Interpreting*, 57). Colossians, for example, “shows how a so-called ‘enthusiastic’ realized eschatological perspective can produce an insistence on patriarchal behavior as well as an acceptance of the established political-social status quo of inequality and exploitation in the name of Jesus Christ” (*IMH*, 254). It is clear in this statement that Schüssler Fiorenza and Yoder read the Colossian *Haustafel* in a similar way, if not the same. The difference between them is while Yoder sees in it the christological ground for living out the voluntary subordination, Schüssler Fiorenza rejects it as an apologetic for cooptation.

If Yoder belongs to the few scholars in the discussion of the *Sitz im Leben* of the household code form who think that “the demands for the obedience and submission of wives, children, and slaves are genuinely Christian,” Schüssler Fiorenza places herself in the camp of the majority that sees the code “as a later Christian adaptation of a Greco-Roman or Jewish-Hellenistic philosophical-theological code” (ibid.). Mostly in agreement with the latter group, which includes Dibelius, Weidinger, Lohse, Lohmeyer, and Crouch, she finds the greatest merit in the insights of Thraede, Lührmann and Balch

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who point to a form which was codified early on by Aristotle in economics and politics and which was widespread in philosophical teachings and morals of the first century. Especially Balch’s research on how the household and the state are intertwined in antiquity, how the household which was “economically independent, self-sufficient, hierarchically ordered” was “the basis of the state” (ibid.), adds weight to her understanding of the *Haustafeln* as a later Christian adaptation of the existing code of the wider society. The close interrelationship among the three topoi, “concerning the state,” “concerning household management,” and “concerning marriage,” as Balch points out, is particularly illuminating.

Schüessler Fiorenza finds Aristotle’s decisive influence on Western political philosophy deeply problematic because, among other things, of his understanding of marriage as a union “of natural ruler and subject” (*Politics* i.1252a 31), as noted earlier (See p. 63), and of slavery as an institution that is “expedient and right” for slaves themselves (*Politics* i.1254b 7-1255a 2). The most important point that Schüssler Fiorenza finds in Aristotle in relation to the *Haustafeln* is his understanding that every household is part of the state, and that therefore if the hierarchical rule in the household is not exercised faithfully, it jeopardizes the state. She recounts Balch’s citations of neo-Pythagoreans and Stoics in whose philosophy Aristotle’s political philosophy was revitalized. And then she moves on to show its acceptance in Hellenistic Judaism.

Philo puts the similar stress on the interrelationship between household and state management. As we have seen (See p. 70), he writes, “for a house is a city compressed into small dimensions, and household management may be called a kind of state
management, just as a city too is a great house and statesmanship the household management of the general public” (*On Joseph*, 38). Then he concludes, “All this shows clearly that the household manager is identical with the statesman” (ibid., 39). He shows the same idea in *The Special Laws* iii. 170-171 (See p. 70). In a clearly apologetic context, Josephus also tries to convince the Roman society that the Jewish households uphold the Roman laws on marriage and upbringing of children: “The woman … is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, … for the authority has been given by God to the man” (*Against Apion* ii. 201). Schüssler Fiorenza detects the Aristotelian ethics of submission and rule in Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ *Roman Antiquities* as well, in which he recounts the law that leads “the women to behave themselves with modesty and great decorum” (ii. 25.2). It means that women subordinate themselves to their husbands and that “the husbands … rule their wives as necessary and inseparable possessions” (ii. 25.4).

Even the marriage ethos, which stresses the harmony between the couples like Plutarch’s, includes the same emphasis that “the wife should not only share her husband’s friends but also his gods” (*IMH*, 259). Plutarch’s *Advice to Bride and Groom* 140D says the wife should “shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions. For with no god do stealthy and secret rites performed by a woman find any favour” (See p. 84). As Cicero’s *Laws* ii. 8.19-9.22 shows (See p. 84), the general assumption of Greco-Roman society was that wives and slaves practice the religion of their husbands or masters and preserve the ancestral customs of the religion of the house. This is the point of the greatest import to Schüssler Fiorenza in her understanding of the
Haustafeln. Since the patriarchal family was the “nucleus of the state” (IMH, 264), the well-being of the state was closely intertwined with the religious observance of the patriarchal family’s laws and customs. Therefore, “Slaves and wives who do not worship the gods of the paterfamilias violate not only their household duties but also the laws of the state” (ibid., 259).

Schüssler Fiorenza concentrates on a potential political offense and an infringement of the political order the conversion of women, children, and slaves must have posed itself to be, when they belonged to the household of an unconverted paterfamilias. Their conversion itself “constituted a revolutionary subversive threat,” because it endangered both the order of the household and the political order of the state (ibid., 264). It is the foundation of the pagan perception of Christians interfering with the patriarchal order. She emphatically concludes,

Insofar as Christians accepted slaves and women from pagan households as converts and members, they clearly broke the ancestral laws. Their self-understanding as the new eschatological community, the new creation, the new humanity, in which the social-political stratifications of religion, class, slavery, and patriarchal marriage are abolished, and all are equal in Christ, was an alternative vision that clearly undermined the Greco-Roman patriarchal order. (ibid., 265)\(^{52}\)

As a defense from the slanders against Christians that they are disrupting the established order of the house and the state, the church tried to prove that Christians are supporters not enemies of the Roman political order by adopting the patriarchal-societal ethos of the

\(^{52}\) Even though she differentiates this observation from Yoder’s, Yoder’s comment that their approaches are parallel to each other (Politics, 190, n. 60) is justified.
time, and as a result, this ethos eventually replaced the genuine Christian vision of equality.

Schüssler Fiorenza’s arguments are appealing in many ways, especially in regards to the implicit requirement of submission and inequality on the part of the Christian wife in the *Haustafel* texts, as the Ephesians code shows. Because the relationship between Christ and the church is used as the paradigm for Christian marriage, the code reinforces the patriarchal pattern of subordination. It is the case, “insofar as the relationship between Christ and the church clearly is not a relationship between equals, since the church-bride is totally dependent and subject to her head or bridegroom.” Therefore, her conclusion has a merit: “the general injunction for all members of the Christian community, ‘Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ,’ is clearly spelled out for the Christian wife as requiring submission and inequality” (ibid., 269). Even the exhortation to the husbands to love their wives modeled after Christ’s paradigmatic self-giving love for the church “does not have the power, theologically, to transform the patriarchal pattern of the household code, even though this might have been the intention of the author” (ibid., 270).

Schüssler Fiorenza’s extraordinary scholarship offers profound insight into the deeply ingrained androcentrism in the Bible, its interpretations, and in the society. Despite her criticism of Yoder’s reading of the *Haustafeln*, one finds more similarities between them than she would admit. Both agree on what the original impact of the gospel on first believers has been, however soon its power seemed to be lost; and both agree on what Christian relationships with one another should look like. But Schüssler Fiorenza’s rejection of the notion of subordination itself reminds one of Sarah Coakley’s criticism of
Daphne Hampson: that the latter presupposes the same kind of power relations as the male notion that she seeks to attack. There are also a few issues that present themselves to problematize Schüssler Fiorenza’s arguments: namely, her understanding of canon, her treatment of tradition, and her undue reliance on democracy. Now we turn to them.

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Chapter 3. Schüssler Fiorenza’s Critique

In their studies of the New Testament household codes, Yoder and Schüssler Fiorenza note the original subversive and destructive effect of the early Christianity on the patriarchal order of both the household and the state. They also agree that the subordination concepts were initially accepted on a missionary-tactical ground. But unlike Yoder, who adds christological motivation to it, Schüssler Fiorenza accuses the Haustafel ethos of having adapted the Christian community to its patriarchal society. She basically thinks that the Haustafel instructions are “patterns of patriarchal submission” and “a Christianized form of Aristotelian ethics,” which have exerted their destructive influence on women and on “the community of co-equal discipleship” (Discipleship, 165-66).

In her essay, “Discipleship and Patriarchy,” Schüssler Fiorenza calls for “a disciplined dialogue between Biblical scholars and moral theologians” and suggests a feminist critical evaluative hermeneutics of the Bible and the Christian tradition. Rather than remaining nostalgic in its remembrance or serving to maintain the status quo, she urges the Christian ethicists’ discussion on the Bible’s authority and use in moral discourse to focus on the “death-dealing” as well as “life-giving” influences of the biblical traditions (ibid., 133). She acknowledges the Bible’s double effects: “True, both the ethos of co-equal discipleship and of the patriarchal pattern of submission can claim Scriptural authority and canonicity. Both are expressions of believing communities in the first century and today” (ibid., 166). The problem is, as evidenced in the American Civil
War in regards to slavery, that the latter has formed a stronger tradition and has exerted its influence over against the former.

While Schüssler Fiorenza is concerned not only about women but about other subordinated people, she makes a strong case for women’s liberation and extends it to others. The *Haustafel* texts become the test case in this essay. She notes what could have escaped male scholars’ attention: that the increase of the scholarly interest and investigation of *Haustafel* texts has exactly coincided with the women’s movement’s momentum. She finds the central interest of the injunctions of these texts in the enforcement of the submission and obedience of the socially weaker group, combined with the authority of the head of the household. While acknowledging the validity of her concerns, this chapter will examine three issues that stand out in her theological exploration of the household codes: her understandings of the biblical canon and the authority of the Bible, of tradition, and of democracy. The discussion of the first issue will be aided by views of biblical scholars; of the second by Gordon D. Kaufman’s and Alasdair MacIntyre’s arguments on morality and tradition among others; and of the third by Jeffrey Stout’s study of democracy as a tradition.

1. The Biblical Canon and the Authority of the Bible

Schüssler Fiorenza acknowledges that women’s movement signifies a shift in paradigms: “a transformation of the scientific imagination,” “an intellectual conversion,” and a significant “shift in commitment” (*IMH*, li). Then, specifically what kind of paradigm in biblical interpretation has Schüssler Fiorenza taken up for her inquiry? It will
be helpful to discuss the paradigms whose shortcomings she seeks to overcome. She identifies three paradigms in biblical interpretation that preceded hers. First, according to the “doctrinal paradigm,” the Bible as divine revelation which has canonical authority as the Word of God is understood in terms of ahistorical and dogmatic terms. Together with the idea of its literary inerrancy, the Bible is taken to reveal “eternal truth and timeless principles which can be separated from their historical expression” and used as proof-texts that rationalize “a position already taken” (Toward, 96).

The second one is the “paradigm of historical-critical exegesis,” which was developed in reaction to the dogmatic use of Scripture of the doctrinal paradigm. Its understanding of biblical exegesis and history is “objective, value-free, rationalist, and scientific.” Adhering to the aspiration of the natural sciences, this paradigm “seeks to achieve a purely objective reading of the texts and a scientific presentation of the historical facts” (ibid., 97). While academic historical-criticism has moved away from the objectivist, factual understanding of biblical texts themselves, it still claims the value-neutral, detached interpretation. The scholarship of this paradigm contributes to the biblical interpretation by reconstructing the historical meaning of the Bible as accurately as possible. However, Schüssler Fiorenza sees incompatibility between liberation theology and academic historical-critical scholarship, because “on methodological grounds” the latter “refuses to discuss the significance of biblical texts for the contemporary community of faith” (ibid.). For, on the contrary, liberation theology’s focus is on the significance of the Bible for the liberation struggle.
The third one is the “hermeneutic-contextual paradigm.” It takes the methodological insights of academic historical-criticism seriously, but has moved beyond its conception of interpretative task. Rather than seeking value-neutral, detached interpretation of the Bible, thus refusing to offer theological significance of given biblical texts for the contemporary Christian life, this third paradigm conceives biblical writings as “theological responses to pastoral-practical situations and problems” (ibid., 98). It understands the biblical tradition as “a living tradition” (ibid.) and seeks to show the religious, theological meaning of biblical texts within their cultural, political, and societal contexts. At the same time, the hermeneutic emphasis of this paradigm “conceives of the relationship between the contemporary interpreter and the historical text as a continuous dialogue that corrects the presuppositions of the interpreter and works out the true meaning of the text” (ibid., 99).

Over against these three paradigms in biblical interpretation, Schüssler Fiorenza advocates “feminist interpretive paradigm of emancipatory praxis” (ibid., 106) which allows the critical theology of liberation to be selective: to reject oppressive traditions within biblical texts and history on one hand, and to detect and utilize liberative traditions on the other. It is grounded in the observation that “Christian Scripture and tradition are not only a source of truth, but also of untruth, repression, and domination” (ibid.). While not driven to a total rejection of the Scripture like some feminists, Schüssler Fiorenza cannot accept it as a whole, either, due to its language, contents and interests that are androcentric, misogynist and patriarchal. Thus the question of “canon” presents itself to be a very important one in her system. She builds on the hermeneutic-contextual
paradigm’s understanding of “the canon as the pluriform root-model of the Christian community” (ibid.), along with its acknowledgement that we often find in the Bible various contradictory responses to the historical situation of the community, whether Israelite or Christian.

Especially important to her system is the hermeneutic-contextual paradigm’s formulation, “canon within the canon,” since it distinguishes biblical texts that contain more essential Christian revelation from the others: whether those theologians’ criteria are along the lines of “revelatory essence and historical expression,” “timeless truth and culturally conditioned language,” “constant Christian tradition and changing traditions” (ibid.) or a “usable” and unusable “past” (IMH, 16). From her fundamental rejection of hidden ideologies at work behind the “fiction” of intellectual neutrality, however, Schüssler Fiorenza goes beyond that paradigm,¹ since it does not include ideological critique of biblical truth and history. She suggests “that the canon and norm for evaluating biblical traditions and their subsequent interpretations … can only be formulated within and through the struggle for the liberation of women and all oppressed people” (Toward, 107).

It is significant that she takes the “experience” of oppression and liberation that is “personally and politically reflected” as “the criterion of ‘appropriateness’ for biblical interpretation” (ibid.). This new paradigm of biblical interpretation has as its goal the actual, historical realization of the eschatological vision of freedom and salvation in the

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¹ For Schüssler Fiorenza’s moving beyond the space of the neo-orthodox “canon within the canon” discussion, see BSS, 11.
community of faith. Consequently, her criteria of evaluation are whether different biblical traditions function “to oppress or liberate people” (ibid., 109). The canon, to Schüssler Fiorenza, is “the liberation of women [and all oppressed people] from oppressive, sexist structures, institutions, and internalized values” (ibid., 108). She accords the claim of truth and of theological authority only to the “nonexist,” “nonandrocentric,” and “nonoppressive” traditions of the Bible and biblical interpretation such as Gal. 3:28, but not to any oppressive and destructive biblical traditions such as 1 Cor. 14 or 1 Tim. 2 (ibid.).

Another dimension of this new paradigm is its understanding of the Bible as prototype, not as archtype. Schüssler Fiorenza quotes Rachel Blau DuPlessis on the difference between the two:

A dictionary definition reveals the significant distinction between the words. While both archtype and prototype “denote original models,” an archtype “is usually construed as an ideal form that establishes an unchanging pattern ....” However, ... A prototype is not a binding, timeless pattern, but one critically open to the possibility, even the necessity of its own transformation. Thinking in terms of prototypes historicizes myth.²

This distinction allows room for the new critical paradigm to unmask and dismantle scholarly detachment and neutrality as a “fiction” or “false consciousness” and to reveal the definite political interests it serves (Toward, 109). Then, what is the problem of this paradigm? What is the problem of its understanding of the canon? In the case of the highly controversial Haustafel texts in the New Testament, what are Christians supposed to make of them? If, unlike Schüssler Fiorenza’s view, the Bible is still regarded as

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“norm and source and constitutive Book of the church,” what is the most appropriate and faithful way to read these texts? Or can they be dismissed on the basis of their androcentric nature? These questions are closely related to the issue of the authority of the Bible, which will be the focus of study in this section.

When it comes to the Haustafel texts, which have historically been abused to legitimate oppression and exploitation of women and other underprivileged people, heated debates are almost inevitable. In the biblical scholarship, there have been debates about the authorship of these texts. From earliest days Paul’s and Peter’s letters held acknowledged places in the Scripture. Their claim to Pauline and Petrine authorship remained unquestioned. They were consistently treated as genuine letters written by the apostles without any hint of doubt or uncertainty until the end of the eighteenth century. The supposed Pauline authorship of Ephesians, for example, began to be doubted near the end of the eighteenth century, especially in Germany; the first objection to the authenticity of the Pastorals (more precisely, on 1 Timothy) was addressed by Schleiermacher in 1807; starting with Herman Heimart Cludius in 1808, an increasing number of scholars has grown convinced that 1 Peter could not have been written by

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Peter himself; and the debate on Colossians’ genuineness started with E. T. Mayerhoff in 1838.7

Debates against Ephesians’ Pauline authorship have been made on the ground of its point of view, theological emphasis, significant differences of language and style from the undisputed Pauline letters, and the relationship of Ephesians to Colossians.8 In the debate about the authorship of Colossians the argument revolves around judgments on style, vocabulary, indications of what looks like a later setting than Paul’s lifetime, and changes in theological perspective.9 The reasons that work against the probability of Peter being the actual author of 1 Peter are: the quality of the Greek used in the letter, constant quotation from the Greek Septuagint, no mention of any circumstances of Jesus’ life, no evidence of Peter’s acquaintance with the communities in Asia Minor, and the fact of established leadership in those communities that suggests a later time than Peter’s lifetime.10

The issues of the authorship, place, and date of composition are inextricably related. Decisions on these issues are also connected to positions taken on a letter’s literary integrity or nonintegrity, affecting each other.11 Thus, as Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke note, you see behind the verdict “inauthentic” a depreciation and devaluation of some elements, at times even of the essential substance and character of

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6 John H. Elliott, 1 Peter (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 120.
7 Barth and Blanke, 119.
8 Andrew T. Lincoln, Ephesians (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), lxii-lxviii.
11 Elliott, 118.
the letters. The verdict against any letter comes to imply that its pseudonymous author is considered “falsifier,” and that the product is maligned as “counterfeit.” Paul J. Achtemeier also points out that authorship is such a dominant concern of modern scholarship that they have evaluated an epistle more on the basis of its authorship than its contents.

A good example of this tendency is Rudolph Bultmann’s and his followers’ criticism of Colossians. They see in Colossians that “a tradition-bound authoritarianism and clericalism have crept into the preaching of the gospel and claim apostolic origin” and that “ethics are produced in the poor form of moralism, as manifested by the return to the equivalent of (Jewish) ‘good works’ and the abundance of prohibitions.” For them, “Colossians presents no more than a ‘somewhat faded Paulinism’” and is “part of that sorrowful process which ruined the majesty of the theology of Galatians and Romans, and led into the abysses of the Pastoral Epistles.” They even blame the Synods for having received Colossians into the collection of canonical books. It is not hard to surmise that the Colossian household code is the prime example of what they denunciate the book for.

Through the discussion of different opinions of scholars – Schroeder, Crouch and Balch, among others – concerning the sources of the Hastafeln, we have learned that the texts have two elements together: namely the distinctive Christian motivations on one hand and the actual instructions that are compatible to the expectations of the larger

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12 Barth & Blanke, 114.
13 Ibid., 123. Also see Markus Barth, Ephesians (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 38.
15 Barth & Blanke, 115.
society on the other. Eph. 5:21 (“Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ”), Col. 3:17 (“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”), and 1 Peter 2:12 (“Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge”) have been singled out in one way or another as passages that serve as “the interpretational key[s] to the household-code instructions.”

But do these passages and others (“in the Lord,” “fearing the Lord,” etc.) “thoroughly Christianize the code” as N. T. Wright contends, or rather do they end up theologizing and thereby reinforcing the cultural-social structures of domination, as Schüssler Fiorenza retorts (IMH, 270)?

While admitting that “many of the ethical emphases in these Christian summaries can be paralleled from Jewish and Stoic sources,” F. F. Bruce notes the radical difference that “the addition of such a phrase as ‘in the Lord’” makes, “for such an addition introduces a difference in kind and not merely in degree. Here is a new and powerful dynamic. … The added words, simple as they are, transform the whole approach to ethics.” Barth and Blanke also acknowledge that “the theme of ‘subjection’ expresses a uniquely Judeo-Christian obligation.”

David Schroeder, as discussed earlier, provides

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16 On Eph. 5:21 see Mitton, 195, Bruce, 382, and Lincoln (1990), 363; on Col. 3:17 see Ralph P. Martin, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1991), 126, and Bruce, 161; on 1 Peter 2:12 see Fiorenza, IMH, 261. The quotation is from Fiorenza.

17 Wright, 147.

18 Bruce, 162.

19 Barth & Blanke, 435.
the “most comprehensive effort to establish the Haustafel as a uniquely Christian creation.”

On the contrary, Crouch insists that the “addition of ‘in the lord’ does not change the content of ethical exhortations. It merely designates the area in which they apply. The standards of the social order to which the Haustafel requires conformity remain unchanged in their essence.” Balch notes that the Christian employment of these Aristotelian household codes was in tension with the earlier Jesus movement. Schüssler Fiorenza sees in the household codes the deepening influence of the patriarchal order of domination on the structures of the Christian community, starting from Colossians’ to 1 Peter’s to Ephesians’ to the Pastorals’ (IMH, 266). She argues that the codes “spiritualize” and “internalize” the Christian calling in “acceptance of the established political-social status quo of inequality and exploitation in the name of Jesus Christ” (ibid., 266, 254).

What would we do with these two apparently coexisting elements inside the Haustafeln that are in tension with each other, especially in regards to the authorship of the texts? Would we deny the authenticity of the letters that contain those household codes, on the ground that the Paul, who inculcates “the noblest Christian ideals” of Gal. 3:28 and who “shows himself to be ahead of time in the liberality with which he insists on equal rights between husbands and wives, especially where their marital relationship is concerned (1 Cor. 7:3-4),” cannot have been the author of Colossians and Ephesians?

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20 Crouch, 26.
21 Ibid., 154.
22 Balch (1988), 32.
23 Johnson (2001), 211.
24 Bruce, 164.
Or would we insist on Pauline authorship of these letters and on Petrine authorship of 1 Peter, and overemphasize the distinctive Christian impulse behind the codes at the expense of doing justice to the patriarchal elements in them, because the apostles could not have meant to include the latter? Either way, it would be an argument relying upon the premise that “what must not be, cannot have occurred.” Both the promoters of the authenticity of the letters and those who oppose it find it extremely hard to conclude on that matter. However, there is a remarkable trend in some of more recent commentators on the texts.

Even though they get to the conclusion either for or against Paul’s or Peter’s authorship of the letters, they agree that the process involves much speculation on the part of each scholar, and often offer their final opinions with considerable reservations. In his commentary on Ephesians, Barth regards a group of scholars who refrain from passing any judgment on authenticity as possibly “the most prudent,” and adds, “they hold that Ephesians can be properly exegeted without a pronounced opinion regarding its author.” Avoiding the final decision on who wrote 1 Peter, David L. Bartlett says, “In terms of the theological claims of the epistle, the answer one gives to the question of authorship may make surprisingly little difference. … The question of the authorship of 1

26 Those who regard Colossians as Paul’s writing and those who think that it was written by a disciple of Paul have been identified on p. 17. Those who opt for the authenticity of Ephesians are Bruce, Barth, and Johnson, while many others deny it, including Meeks, Mitton, Perkins, Martin, Lincoln, and again, Schüssler Fiorenza. The list of scholars who conclude on Petrine authorship of 1 Peter includes Johnson, Michaels, and Davids. Davids thinks that Silvanus wrote the letter at Peter’s direction [See Peter H. Davids, The First Epistle of Peter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 10.] Balch, Perkins, Senior, Elliott, Achteveier, and Best, on the other hand, take it more probable to regard the letter as pseudonymous work produced in the Petrine school. Identification of the dates of these letters depends on each scholar’s decision on the authorship and vice versa.
27 Barth, 38.
Peter is probably unanswerable. The question of its usefulness to the church is not.”

Ernest Best, who concludes that 1 Peter is pseudonymous, remarks something in the same vein: “the understanding of the epistle is not greatly affected by such a decision about authorship.”

Briefly speaking, it has to do with those scholars’ new understanding of the ancient practice of pseudonymity, their appreciation of the texts as part of canon, and, in the case of Paul’s letters, their acknowledgement of peculiarities and tension even in his undisputed letters. Luke Timothy Johnson’s study on the Pastorals is very helpful to understand the relationship between authorship and authority of texts. He observes “the intractable diversity of even the undisputed letters” and says that “there is no generic ‘Pauline letter’” and “there is no such thing as a ‘Pauline theology,’” as conventionally held. More importantly in regards to the Haustafeln, he refers to Paul’s “mixed views on women’s roles” and “limits to Paul’s egalitarianism.” C. Leslie Mitton also notes that Paul is not consistent in his view of women. Johnson regards all the standard arguments against the Pastorals’ authenticity are certainly flawed, and concludes that placement of the letters “within Paul’s ministry becomes the most elegant hypothesis.”

With the Pastorals, he accepts both Colossians and Ephesians as Pauline – “Pauline” in an extended way, because he understands “Paul’s ‘school’ as present and operative in the

30 Johnson (2001), 63, 93.
31 Ibid., 81, 207.
32 Mitton, 197.
33 Johnson (2001), 97.
production of his letters even during his lifetime” and thinks that “it is most likely that other minds and hearts as well as his own contributed to their composition.”

Refuting the “inertia” and “construal” at work in the conventional wisdom that exclude the Pastorals from the authentic Pauline corpus, for being “complex, subjective, and circular” and for being “a fragile human construct,” Johnson argues: “Where does the process of purgation stop? … Just as it is a mistake to give the ancient text absolute authority, so is it an error to assume that a contemporary ethos or outlook has absolute validity.” Johnson makes a brilliant conclusion: “Only if texts that have scandalous and even harmful possibilities are confronted and engaged by public discourse within the assembly can their harmful potential be exorcised and their remaining positive features be safely considered.”

Following Johnson, this paper opts for reading Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter as authentic Pauline and Petrine letters, and at the same time it both appreciates the distinctive Christian motivation behind the household codes on the one hand, and acknowledges the authors’ limits to egalitarianism in their own cultural and social context on the other hand, without eclipsing either in light of the other. For, as N. T. Wright argues, “In fact, all writing, including the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, is totally ‘culturally conditioned.’” He adds, “It is only within the local, historically and culturally conditioned message of Paul to Colossae that later generations, ourselves included, may

34 Ibid., 59-60.
35 Ibid., 90, 55.
37 Ibid., 210-11.
hear what the Spirit is saying to the church." Wayne A. Meeks’ question on American slavery and the *Haustafeln* is valid here: “‘Ideological critics’ can without difficulty point out that their [defenders of slavery] reasoning was blinded by their self-interest – but which of ours is not?”

These approaches to the Scripture reading have some things in common: their claim of the Bible as norm in believers’ lives and their acceptance of the canonical books as they have been traditionally handed down. Schüssler Fiorenza’s strong claim for the significance of beginning with women’s experience in her hermeneutical endeavors, even deriving the “canon” of her feminist critical theology of liberation from the contemporary struggle of women against oppressive systems of patriarchy such as racism, sexism, and poverty and from its systematic explorations, not from the biblical writings, therefore, stands in conflict with this understanding of the biblical canon. In her attempts to interrupt the dominant tendency within feminist discourses in religion since the 19th century, either to “totally accept and defend church and religion as liberating” or to “leave them behind as totally patriarchal” (*BNS*, 176), she asserts the validity of the selective according of authority to the biblical texts on the basis of her “canon.”

A feminist theological interpretation of the Bible that has as its canon the liberation of women from oppressive sexist structures, institutions, and internalized values must, therefore, maintain that only the nonsexist and nonandrocentric traditions of the Bible and the nonoppressive traditions of biblical interpretation have the theological authority of revelation if the Bible is not to continue as a tool for the oppression of women. The “advocacy stance”

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38 Wright, 40.
demands that oppressive and destructive biblical traditions cannot be accorded any truth and authority claim today. (Toward, 108)\(^{40}\)

It is in line with Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s argument in the “Preface” of The Woman’s Bible that we should read the Bible “as we do all other books, accepting the good and rejecting the evil it teaches.”\(^{41}\)

Schüssler Fiorenza’s approach to the Bible as “historical prototype” or as “a formative root-model” of biblical faith and life, rather than as “timeless archetype” or “court of appeals” (Discipleship, 161), and her idea of the Bible as “resource” and “model,” not as “norm,” which leaves the Bible “open to feminist theological transformation” (BNS, 10-14) constitute a problem. She suggests that “the canon and norm for evaluating biblical traditions and their subsequent interpretations cannot be derived from the Bible,” but only from “the struggle for the liberation of women and all oppressed people” (Toward, 107). In her understanding, biblical texts are placed under the authority of feminist experience, and they are accepted or rejected according to their compatibility with the latter. This approach of hers is seriously attacked by Sondra Wheeler. Wheeler regards the Bible as the “norm and source and constitutive Book of the church,” and asserts that her commitment to feminism “arises out of a prior commitment to the biblical canon.”\(^{42}\) Similarly, Mary Ann Tolbert admits her own bias “in favor of the Bible.”\(^{43}\)

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\(^{40}\) For a fuller exposition of this idea, see IMH, 32-33. Given Schüssler Fiorenza’s arbitrary, selective reading of the Bible, one is pushed to ask why she needs the Bible at all.

\(^{41}\) Stanton, “Preface,” The Woman’s Bible, Part I, 8.

\(^{42}\) Wheeler, 132-33.

\(^{43}\) Tolbert, “Defining the Problem: the Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics,” 114.
Richard Hays detects the danger of Schüssler Fiorenza’s feminist critical hermeneutic, saying that it “might undermine the authority of the New Testament so thoroughly that its liberating power would also be lost.” This is the point that Yoder refutes concerning the presumptuous “self-sufficiency” of modern theological practices, in which “the present insight of the bearer” preceded the Word of God in sovereign judgment. While it is a worthy claim that the “history of patriarchal oppression must not be allowed to cancel out the history of the life, struggles, and leadership of women in biblical religion” (IMH, 351), letting this contemporary practical cause override the authority of the Bible is hard to accept. The authority of the Bible comes first, and then the serious reflection on feminist experiences comes for the more wholesome reading and appropriation of the Bible.

Claiming the Bible as norm in the ethical issues that we face today, without making “disastrous mistakes” of using it in legitimizing the slavery or other types of oppression of people on the basis of sex, class, race, etc., requires us to have something like Meeks’ “hermeneutics of social embodiment.” One of the things that we can do for Christian moral formation, he suggests, is “to create practices and occasions that will nurture ‘the daily habit of direct fellow feeling’ (George Eliot) so as to shape a moral intuition appropriate to the gospel.” Johnson argues that “the noblest …. must always be negotiated within the hard and resistant circumstances of cultural contexts in which

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45 Meeks (1996), 245.
46 Ibid., 252.
the power and privilege – as well as the complex and ambiguous embodiments – of difference are always present. Thus, faithful reading of the *Haustafeln* requires us to be alert to the danger of being subsumed under our petty self-interest and also to the danger of assuming the unnecessary role of defending the gospel closing our eyes to the tensions within the scriptural messages.

2. Tradition: Schüssler Fiorenza, Kaufman and MacIntyre

Schüssler Fiorenza’s selective affording of authority to biblical texts according to their conduciveness or lack thereof to the liberation struggles of women and all the underprivileged reveals her view of tradition. In the “Afterword” of *Bread Not Stone*, she talks about how her book is supposed to be viewed. She claims that her “proposal of a critical interpretation for liberation” should be situated “within the North American pragmatic tradition,” but that at the same time its indebtedness to critical theory should be acknowledged (*BNS*, 219 n. 69). She refuses to have her feminist work be evaluated only in terms of “malestream hermeneutical discourses,” but insists on its dependence on the “intellectual foresisters” (ibid., 178). She wants it to be acknowledged that her “theoretical framework is influenced by the work of feminist critical theory and epistemological discourses” (ibid., 219 n. 70).

The reason that the evaluation of feminist biblical hermeneutics must be done in relation to its own theoretical frameworks and practical goals is to keep feminist scholarship from “collaborating in the continuing patri-kyriarchal silencing and

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47 Johnson (2001), 211.
marginalizing of feminist theoretical accomplishments.” Her discussion of feminist biblical hermeneutics has two elements closely linked to each other: tradition and democracy, which will be dealt with in this chapter respectively. Radical democratic understanding of the ekklēsia of women in her book, Schüssler Fiorenza argues, is the continuation of the “nineteenth century suffragist tradition on the religious importance of democracy” (ibid., 178).

The submerged feminist intellectual tradition of religious agency and biblical interpretation, in which my own work stands, has claimed and continues to claim the authority and right of wo/men to interpret experience, tradition, and religion from their own perspective and in their own interests. This tradition has insisted that equality, freedom, and democracy can not be realized if wo/men’s voices are not raised, heard, and heeded in the struggle for justice and liberation for everyone, regardless of sex, class, race, nationality, or religion. (Ibid., 178-179)

This statement includes many important elements to consider: the importance of giving women voice and of adding their perspective to the interpretation of experience, tradition, and religion, even though it is clear that Schüssler Fiorenza goes way beyond “adding” it to other perspectives; her resistance to the feminist essentialism; and this feminist intellectual endeavor forming a “tradition” of its own.

The biggest contribution that the feminist movement and studies have made is to help acknowledge how much women’s voices have been silenced and stifled. An African-American feminist, Anna Julia Cooper’s 1892 appeal to restore the wholeness of vision and imagination brings the point to light succinctly.

It is not the intelligent woman vs. the ignorant woman; nor the white woman vs. the black, the brown, and the red, — it is not even the cause of woman vs. man. Nay, it is woman’s strongest vindication for speaking that the world needs to hear her voice. It would be subversive of every human interest that the cry of one half of the human family be stifled. Woman … daring to think and move and speak,
— to undertake to help shape, mold and direct the thought of her age, is merely completing the circle of the world’s vision. Hers is every interest that has lacked an interpreter and a defender. Her cause is linked with that of every agony that has been dumb — every wrong that needs a voice …. The world has had to limp along with the wobbling gait and one-sided hesitancy of a man with one eye. Suddenly the bandage is removed from the other eye and the whole body is filled with light. It sees a circle where before it saw a segment. The darkened eye restored, every member rejoices with it.  

In terms of women’s self-understanding and the understanding of lives of women, Schüssler Fiorenza refuses both “an idealized and abstract notion of universal humanity whose paradigm is elite Western man” and “an essentialist ideal concept of woman” that is patterned by white elite woman (DOE, 359). She claims that the hermeneutic principle of a feminist critical evaluative hermeneutics of liberation takes being woman and being Christian as “a social, historical, and cultural ecclesial process.” She continues,

What it means to be a Christian woman is not defined by essential female nature or timeless Biblical revelation but grows out of the concrete social structures and cultural-religious mechanisms of women’s oppression as well as our struggles for liberation, selfhood, and transcendence. Feminist identity is not based on the understanding of women as defined by female biology or feminine gender differences and societal-ecclesial roles but on the common historical experience of women as an oppressed people. (Discipleship, 158)

Paying special attention to the crucial impact of ethnicity, culture, race, socioeconomic status, or religion on the lives of women is a tremendous progress in women’s studies. As mentioned earlier, rather than understanding women’s experiences in terms of gender dualism, and patriarchy simply as the domination of men over women, liberation movements around the globe have pointed out racism, poverty, and militarist colonialism as being integral to the structures of women’s oppression.

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Serene Jones offers a definition of “essentialism/universalism” as any view of women’s nature that makes universal claims about women based on characteristics considered to be an inherent part of being female. The notion of universality highlights the all-pervasive scope of essentialist claims about women’s nature, namely, the belief that features of womanhood cover women’s lives in every place, age, and culture without exception.49

And this essentialism, as Schüssler Fiorenza’s refusal shows, has become the main area of contestation among feminists since the 1980s. Meanwhile, as Clare Hemmings explains, “critiques of essentialism have brought contradictory possibilities. There have been positive gains from the recognition of difference,” whereas “loss of the imagined community of ‘sisterhood’ has led to fragmentation and disrupted political cohesion.” Feminist theorists are aware that they “are left with the question of what new kinds of alliance might be possible in a post-unitary feminist landscape.”50

Feminist theologians including Schüssler Fiorenza acknowledge that “feminist theology is part of the feminist movement.”51 And they are also concerned about the problem of losing the practical power in the feminist movement caused by the rejection of the essentialism. Rebecca S. Chopp shows in her essay, “Theorizing Feminist Theology,” the connection of essentialism within the first stage of feminist theory with foundationalism of modern theory, on the one hand, and the connection of the second wave feminism’s rejection of essentialism with postmodernism’s relativism. She asks,

“How can we avoid the problems of modern foundationalism without landing into a nihilistic state of relativism?”

Unlike secular feminist theorists, feminist theologians show they have opportunities through which they can think through this issue of essentialism and loss of practical power in the feminist movement. Chopp herself makes it the thesis of her essay that “feminist theology need not merely accept the limits of feminist theory to define the sites of contestation and thus the substance of its reflection.” While feminist theory is mostly atheological, feminist theologians – such as Sheila Briggs, Serene Jones, and Kathryn Tanner – find their faith claims, tradition, and community as important resources that enable them to envision the liberation of women, when they are properly reassessed, redefined, and reclaimed.

It is noteworthy that whether these feminists accept essentialism or not, they acknowledge the importance of tradition in their work, even though the validity of the way they rely on tradition is another matter. The most significant part of Schüssler Fiorenza’s statement on the “feminist intellectual tradition of religious agency and biblical interpretation” reveals her notion of tradition. She claims women’s authority and right “to interpret experience, tradition, and religion from their own perspective and in their own interests” (BNS, 179). Not only this claim but also the depth of the claimed authority and right expressed in her work remind one of Gordon D. Kaufman’s discussion of morality and tradition, and then of its counterpart found in Alasdair MacIntyre’s.

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53 Ibid., 231.
Juxtaposing their discussions with each other will help illuminate Schüssler Fiorenza’s position on these matters.

Gordon D. Kaufman’s *In Face of Mystery* and Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue* share the recognition of the condition of morality in our modern society, but they locate the problem in different places in terms of tradition. Kaufman feels that the foundations of the world have become badly eroded to the point of the self-destruction of our human civilization and of human life in its entirety, by the enormous confusions about morality and its significance, manifested in ecological destruction and the threat of nuclear wars. Addressing this problem, Kaufman maintains that he seeks continuity with the Christian tradition, but he diverges considerably in his attempts to redefine the inherited symbols and ideas into the more intelligible and functioning ones in our time.

MacIntyre also declares that “what once was morality has to some large degree disappeared” and that “this marks a degeneration, a grave cultural loss” (*AV*, 22). He identifies the problem as the lack of “any coherent rationally defensible statement” in modern moral arguments, and argues that “the Aristotelian tradition can be restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments” (ibid., 259). Thus, both Kaufman and MacIntyre want intelligibility, but in quite contrasting ways: Kaufman seeks to make Christianity intelligible and more relevant to the contemporary world by transforming the language of the Christian tradition; on the contrary, MacIntyre contends that our moral discourses and practices

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become intelligible when they are placed within the proper social and historical context that the tradition of the virtues provides.

In face of all the differentiation, plurality, specialization of the modern societies, with the uncontrolled technological developments, which significantly diminish the effective interaction and relativizing function among the different dimensions of responsible human life, Kaufman asserts that we have an urgent need to move toward a more universal human consciousness, away from more limited and parochial commitments in religious, cultural, and political matters. Pointing out that many in our time, including the Christian segments of the world, find the inherited understanding of God “implausible, indeed unacceptable or even intolerable” (IFM, 3), Kaufman contends that it is imperative that we find new ways to understand and organize our world.

He makes it clear that reification of the symbol “God” is at the root of the problems in traditional theology (ibid., 329). “Reification” means, Kaufman notes, “taking the content of a symbol (or image or word) to be a proper description or exact representation of a particular reality or being” (ibid., 330). He is vehemently against the personalistic, anthropomorphic, and ontological models being used for God, because Christianity with its reified conception of God as creator/lord/father has been abused tremendously to legitimize imperialism, patriarchal sexism, racism, religious chauvinism, and the exploitation of the environment, among others. Integral to his exploration is his

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notion that theology is an activity of “imaginative construction” (ibid., ix), of bringing something that has not been there before into being, not simply an activity of making explicit what has been there all along (ibid., 423). This notion of theology makes it possible for human consciousness, which has attained an almost complete historical and cultural transformation (ibid., 265), to dispense with the need to reify the models.

In order to accomplish the construction of radically de-reified conception of God, Kaufman employs “drastic changes” in the metaphors that have been provided by tradition (ibid., 492). This evokes quite an amount of criticism that his theological discourse is too abstract and speculative, as he himself acknowledges (ibid., xii), and that it is overly anthropocentric. First of all, the fundamental symbols in the threefold categorial scheme of the worldview he presents – humanity, the world, and God – are defined in a way that integrates them all under one single goal, that is, toward continuous well-being and enhancement of human existence. In Kaufman, these categories have heightened and even sublimated senses.

In particular, Kaufman places a big stress on the fact that the evolving cosmic process has produced humanity that is the special mode of being that creates culture and history. He wonders at the fact that “the cosmic process … is capable of giving rise to forms of organization considerably more complex and open than those fully describable and comprehensible in strictly biological terms” (ibid., 265). He makes much out of this culture-creating historicity of humans, because it eventually becomes the criteria of the godness of God in his framework. “God” is the very ultimate mystery, ultimate reality
with that creative trajectory of forces and powers moving toward “the transformation of all human existence into a truly humane order” (ibid., 420).

The “world” also gains its meaning precisely as the context in which this humanity – highly complex beings, with self-consciousness, historicity, and self-reflexiveness (ibid., 126) – has emerged and been sustained. It is not just something impersonal, material, which is indifferent, and often very hostile to humans. The “world” is rather “an order which provides a proper context for the emergence and development of loving human beings living in faithful community with one another and with God … helping to evoke their highest potentialities” (ibid., 90). Where do these categories – the human and the world – get these idealized meanings? It is from the fourth category, Christ. For Kaufman, the category “Christ” has the function of qualifying the other categories in a definitive way. He considers Christ as a definitive expression of God and a normative expression of humanity and consequently of the world. However, Kaufman’s “wider christology” expands the concept of “Christ” to include not only the ministry and death of Jesus but also “the new order of relationships in the early Christian communities” (ibid., 420).

We see here Kaufman’s outright rejection of Chalcedonian doctrines (ibid., 489). Accordingly, the terms such as “incarnation,” “sin,” “evil,” “forgiveness,” “trinity,” “repentance” all have undergone “radical transvaluation of values” (ibid., 403). “Salvation” is related to “further humanization” and to “a more humane and ecologically sustainable order” (ibid., 334). Kaufman’s arbitrary use of these terms shows that his idea of salvation does not involve anything like the radical reverse of humanity’s path from
the one sin and evil have led us on, to the path toward salvation through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, as the traditional theology has taught. Instead, “the direction in which the human trajectory is going … has become visible to human eyes” “in the events surrounding and including and following upon the man Jesus” (ibid., 388). It follows from all this that “to affirm this directionality … is to confess the reality of God” (ibid., 349). Within Kaufman’s anthropocentric theocentrism, confession of faith is a matter of affirmation, not a matter of turning around completely.

MacIntyre provides us with an account on the basis of which we can assess Kaufman’s project effectively. At the same time, we can also say that Kaufman’s account in turn exemplifies modern moral theory that MacIntyre criticizes, thus enabling us to understand the latter’s points better. In the last analysis, Kaufman’s attempt to preserve the Christian tradition – by nothing other than transforming it in a radical way through the employment of highly speculative and unconventional meanings for familiar terms – presents itself to the reader as another incident of what MacIntyre calls “inconsistency” (AIV, 251) that constitutes the “catastrophe” of the modern world (ibid., 3). MacIntyre defines the catastrophe as one in which “the language and the appearances of morality persist even though the integral substance of morality has to a large degree been fragmented and then in part destroyed” (ibid., 5). In other words, it is the condition of the world in which “the language of morality is in order” but in which everything else is in disorder (ibid., 4). According to MacIntyre, this disastrous state comes with “a final break with the classical tradition” and has to do with “the decisive breakdown of” the peculiarly
modern “project of justifying morality in the context of the inherited, but already incoherent, fragments left behind from tradition” (ibid., 59).

Just as Kaufman tries to liberate himself from the limited and parochial commitments in religious, cultural, and political matters – regarding them as “archaic,” “nonsensical” (IFM, 109), “arbitrary,” “authoritarian” and “uncritical” – “the whole of the past is envisaged as a burden” (AV, 16) or “a totalitarian straitjacket for the human condition” (ibid., 142) by modernity. What we see in Kaufman is, therefore, the inheritance from his predecessor culture which has seen the secularization of morality as “a deliverance both from the burdens of traditional theism and the confusions of teleological modes of thought.” MacIntyre continues,

What I have described in terms of a loss of traditional structure and content was seen by the most articulate of their philosophical spokesmen as the achievement by the self of its proper autonomy. The self had been liberated from all those outmoded forms of social organization which had imprisoned it simultaneously within a belief in a theistic and teleological world order and within those hierarchical structures which attempted to legitimate themselves as part of such a world order. (Ibid., 60)

MacIntyre’s criticism of Kant can be directed to Kaufman on the basis of his “attempt to establish on a secular rational basis a morality of law which presupposes the existence of God, but entails not merely the rejection of Aristotelianism, but an identification of it as a prime source of moral error” (ibid., 278). It is because by Aristotelianism MacIntyre means not merely Aristotle’s moral philosophy as it is expressed in key texts in his own writings, but the whole tradition of virtues “in which Aristotle provides a central point of focus” (ibid., 119), which thus includes Aquinas’ Christian works, Maimonides’ Jewish, and Ibn Roschd’s Islamic works (ibid., 53).
Despite Kaufman’s use of explicit Christian categories, his radical transvaluation of those values reveals the fact that his scheme has only “a semblance” of the tradition but not the reality (ibid., 71). More specifically, we see in him the problems of modern moral theory that MacIntyre points out. First, “the individual moral agent, freed from hierarchy and teleology, conceives of himself and is conceived of by moral philosophers as sovereign in his moral authority” (ibid., 62). With Kant, Kaufman understands moral constraints as “our norms in terms of which we do our own judging, not someone else’s; these are our own yardsticks” (*IFM*, 191). It also has to do with the aforementioned overly anthropocentric character of his whole scheme and with his stress on “radical naturalism,” which deeply values human historicity and the world.

Second, deprived of their older teleological character, the inherited but transformed rules of morality need to be vindicated “either by devising some new teleology or by finding some new categorical status for them” (*AV*, 62). Kaufman’s attempt “to follow Kant in presenting the authority of the appeal to moral rules as grounded in the nature of practical reason” belongs to the latter option. Besides the radical transformation of the traditional Christian language already explained, what Kaufman resorts to for this task is the use of heavily value-laden terms. The trinity, for Kaufman, is the very system that implies the inseparable relationship between being and value. Following Kant, he asserts “an essential interconnectedness between morality and action” (*IFM*, 147) and stresses that “morality and action intrinsically belong to each other” (ibid., 201). “Action” in its “fullest and deepest sense” is “responsible,” thus moral, “doing” (ibid., 191). “To be an agent” also “is not merely to be one who can do
something: it is to be one who is held accountable for what he or she does, and who holds herself or himself accountable” (ibid., 147). The very first commandment that Kaufman formulates on the basis of Kant’s categorical imperative is, therefore, “Act! Take responsibility for yourselves!” (ibid., 202), and that means ‘Become agents before doing anything!’ (ibid., 204). MacIntyre argues, however, that both options that have been taken “failed” and still “fail” (AV, 62).

MacIntyre proposes that the recovery of the classical tradition of Aristotelianism is the only viable solution to today’s moral impasse. For Aristotelianism entails all the three stages against whose background the concept of a virtue can be made intelligible: a practice, the narrative order of a unitary human life, and a moral tradition (ibid., 186-87). According to MacIntyre, a tradition relates the past, present, and future in a constructive way. “Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict” and “[a] living tradition … is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition” (ibid., 222). And the virtues, which have thus become intelligible within the social and historical context, denote

those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good. (Ibid., 219)

This is the point on which MacIntyre’s contention clashes hardest with Schüssler Fiorenza’s. While both are concerned about contemporary ethical problems, they get to the opposite conclusions: MacIntyre finds the only solution in reclaiming the Aristotelian tradition and Schüssler Fiorenza in the complete discontinuance with it. She accentuates
the widely-held acknowledgement of Aristotle’s negative influence on Christian anthropology by drawing attention to the fact that such anthropology, more specifically western misogyny, was rooted in Aristotle’s political understanding. Rules for the household, in which *paterfamilias* dominates, were the model of the state and they relegated women and slaves to perpetual submission. She argues,

> Just as he defined the “nature” of slaves with respect to their status as property and to their economic function, so Aristotle defined the “nature” of woman as that of someone who does not have “full authority” to rule …. The definition of “woman’s nature” and “woman’s proper sphere” is thus rooted in a certain relation of domination and subordination between man and woman having a concrete political background and purpose. (*IMH*, 256-257)

Even though the evidence of Aristotle’s misogynous statements is ample, as presented earlier in this paper, as a woman from the other side of the world, which has not only shared serious misogyny but also still is very deep into it without any direct influence of Aristotelianism, I wonder whether western scholarship’s forgoing a tradition which has shaped its culture is the solution.

Kaufman shares with Schüssler Fiorenza the understanding of the dehumanization to which the traditional Christian practices or beliefs have contributed. He is aware how dangerous and destructive theological ideas can be “when used without critical examination and careful reconstruction” (*IFM*, xi). He asks questions similar to Schüssler Fiorenza’s:

> What are we to make of the fact that Christian institutions, communities, and traditions have been responsible for so much oppression and suffering in human history? Why have they been so easily corrupted into serving the interests of the powerful in oppressing the poor, the weak, women, people of color? Why have they so often supported the exploitation of third-world peoples and, indeed, of
planet Earth? Why have they so frequently allied themselves with groups wielding unprincipled power in the world? (Ibid., x)

Like Schüsßler Fiorenza, the goal of his theology is practical, namely to come up with a theology that can guard against all the “abuses and corruptions” (ibid., 78) – what he calls “the rape of other peoples and of the environment” (ibid., 314) – to which western monotheism has so often lent itself. His observation of demonic abuses that a radically monotheistic frame of orientation of the all-powerful God can cause is powerful. He says that in such a framework

God’s demands are absolute, and must be fulfilled to the letter — even if they go against custom, conscience, or reason. Any individuals or groups who believe they know what the absolute God requires feel themselves fully authorized to carry out the divine will — at whatever cost to themselves or others; and there is no point, no position, no argument from which to obtain leverage against such divinely commanded or authorized activities or institutions. (Ibid., 315)

In many regards, Kaufman shows similar sensitivities as those of feminists. For example, he emphasizes the importance of keeping the theological conversation open to “new and previously unheard voices — to women, blacks, the poor, ‘third world’ persons,” and extends it even to “representatives of other religious and secular traditions” (ibid., 69). He shows as acute awareness of his own identity as feminists do: “I write here, inevitably, from a modern western Christian point of view and as a white male living and working largely in academia, with whatever limitations these characteristics entail and whatever insights they make possible” (ibid., xv). His repeated contention that “all theology (including that in the Bible) is human imaginative construction” (ibid., 58) goes hand in hand with Schüsßler Fiorenza’s attention to the biblical writers’ bias and that of the interpreters. She argues, “Rather than assume that the kyriocentric text is a reflection
or record of historical reality, scholars must challenge not only the text’s but also their own ideological practices of erasure and marginalization” (IMH, xxi).

While both Schüssler Fiorenza and Kaufman offer valuable acknowledgement of demonic abuses that have been perpetrated in the name of God-given authority, and while they claim continuity with the Christian tradition, their divergence from it is so significant that it raises the question whether the revision is a faithful outgrowth of the tradition itself or rather its betrayal. Kaufman’s relationship with the western Christian tradition is such a conflicted one, that his declaration that “every effort will be made to maintain significant continuity with the Christian tradition” in his work (IFM, 41) becomes almost meaningless. After assessing “all particular and thus parochial religious and cultural and philosophical traditions” as “outmoded and superseded,” he adds,

But of course we cannot simply dispense with tradition either. For we are biohistorical beings, sociocultural beings, and everything about us, including all our ideas and values, our standards and norms, our ways of living and patterns of action, have been shaped by and in the culture within which we have emerged; that is, by tradition. Without such historicocultural shaping we would have no form at all; we would not even be. (Ibid., 133, original emphasis)

However, his reconstruction and reshaping of the tradition goes too far, as shown earlier, that it has only the tradition’s semblance but not much substance.

If not as much as Kaufman’s reconstruction work does, still Schüssler Fiorenza’s feminist critical evaluative hermeneutics of liberation goes beyond the point of keeping with the tradition, despite her claim of continuity with it, particularly due to the freedom with which she selects those aspects acceptable and beneficial to her project of liberation and discards the rest. What will check its arbitrariness, however honorable a goal the
project seeks to attain? If the interpreter’s authority surpasses that of the tradition, what is the point of appealing to the latter? A similar set of questions can be asked about her placement of an overblown confidence in democracy, which we will now turn to.

3. Democracy: Schüssler Fiorenza, Stout and Yoder

The self-understanding of Schüssler Fiorenza’s scholarly work is “intellectual conscientization” and “production of radical democratic emancipatory knowledges” (SHW, 48). Radical democracy, more than anything else, is what defines her endeavor. Accordingly, she locates her feminist theological analysis within “radical democratic movements around the globe” (DOE, 356). Refusing to position her rhetoric of vision within postmodern theories that see postindustrial capitalist society and its culture as a “system without an author” or as a “subjectless, self-transcending, economic mega-machine,” she seeks to make truth claims for “human dignity, equal rights, emancipation, equality, self-determination, and well-being for everyone” (ibid., 370).

Thus squarely positioning herself in the struggles for the realization of radical democracy, Schüssler Fiorenza understands history delineated as constant “contradiction and tension between the ideal of democracy and actual sociopolitical patriarchal structures” (IMH, xxix). The following observation of hers is powerful.

These kyriocentric arguments have been advanced again and again in Western history, when emancipatory movements inspired by the democratic ideals of freedom and equality have resisted kyriarchal practices of dehumanization. … An explicit ideological justification of kyriarchal social relations always becomes necessary at points in history when democratic notions are introduced into patriarchal societies. In other words, explicit kyriocentric arguments become necessary only when kyriarchal oppression is no longer “commonsense.” (Ibid.)
This observation finds validity, for example, in case of the backfiring of the right-wing political movements against women’s liberation movement, with the appeal to the teachings of the Bible on the family and Christian womanhood. “Whenever women protest against political discrimination, economic exploitation, social inequality and secondary status in the churches,” she argues, “the Bible is invoked because it teaches the divinely ordained subordination of women and the creational differences between the sexes” (*Discipleship*, 134).

Some of Schüssler Fiorenza’s ideas about democracy are well accounted for in her books, *But She Said* and *Discipleship of Equals*. She argues that feminist identity should be conceived in terms of “the logic of democracy” and that the *ekklēsia* of women be conceptualized as “a radical democratic praxis” (*BSS*, 11). The reason that she adds “radical” to her democratic vision is that she is aware of forms of patriarchal democracy, both classical and modern, which fall short of the vision. In her view, the classical form of patriarchal democracy had androcentric and ethnocentric character. It had boundaries between Greeks/Barbarians, male/female, freeborn/slaves, property owners/farmers and artisans, the civilized/uncivilized world. While radical democracy includes everybody in its decision-making process regardless of such categories, Greek democracy gave the right only to Greek, freeborn, male citizens, excluding uncultured Barbarians, uncivilized savages, free Greek women, and unfree persons.

The democratic state of the classical Greek patriarchy was modeled after the patriarchal household which had the propertied male head ruling over his wife, children,
kin, slaves and other dependents, such as tenants and clients. Schüssler Fiorenza explains it further:

The structuring dividing lines run between those men who own property and those women and men who are owned, between those who rule and those who are ruled, between those who as superiors command and those who as subordinates obey, between those who are free from manual labor and have leisure for philosophical and political activity and those who are economically dependent and whose labor is exploited. In the tradition of patriarchal Greek democracy, Western society and family are not just male, but they are patriarchal (rule of the father) or, more accurately, kyriarchal (rule of the master or lord), because elite propertied men have power over those subordinate to and dependent on them. (Ibid., 116-17, original emphasis)

Through the pyramidal stratification of different groups in the society, patriarchal Greek democracy allowed only free male citizens to participate in the *ekklēsia* which “came together in order to deliberate and decide the best course of action for pursuing their own well-being and securing the welfare of the *polis*” (ibid., 118).

With the historical realization of democracy as represented in the Greek aristocratic/oligarchic and the Roman imperial/colonialist forms of patriarchal democracy, Schüssler Fiorenza juxtaposes the theoretical, ideal vision of democracy. She argues that “In theory, all citizens of the *polis* are equal in rights, speech, and power.” Being equal citizens, all those living in the *polis* should be able to participate in government, should be “the arbiters of their fate” and “promote the well-being of all” (ibid.). To her, full democracy is possible in the *ekklēsia* of women, in which democratic vision coincides with democratic process and practice. The *ekklēsia* of women is where there is universal suffrage and political, economic, social and religious equality; where everybody enjoys equal access, equal respect, equal rights and equal well-being; and where heterogeneity,
inclusivity, participation, self-determination, and alternating leadership are respected and practiced (ibid., 119).

In reality, however, the exercise of democratic government in Greece and Rome was restricted along the lines of socioeconomic status and gender to “only a few select freeborn, propertied, elite, male heads of households.” It took “the combined privileges” of citizenship, “property, education, and family status as a freeborn male” to be actually able to participate in government (ibid., 118-119). Thus, Page DuBois’ statement is appealing, when she says, “The ancient democracy must be mapped as an absence. We have only aristocratic, hostile representations of it. … The demos, the people themselves, have no voice in history; they exist only figured by others.”56 Schüssler Fiorenza finds Plato and Aristotle, the “critics of the democratic Athenian city-state,” nevertheless responsible for articulating a philosophy of patriarchal democracy by providing justification of the exclusion of certain groups – freeborn women, slave men and women, etc. – from participation in democratic government on the basis of “their deficient natural powers of reasoning” (DOE, 364).

For example, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle introduces three types of political system along with their deviations: kingship, which is the best and whose deviation is tyranny; aristocracy, which can result in oligarchy due to the badness of the rulers; and timocracy, the worst, whose corrupted form is democracy. He goes further and finds resemblances to these species of political system in households: the structure of kingship in the community of a father and his sons; that of aristocracy between man and woman;

and timocracy in the community of brothers. We can detect Aristotle’s dissatisfaction with democracy when he describes its form in households: “Democracy is found most of all in dwellings without a master, since everyone there is on equal terms; and also in those where the ruler is weak and everyone is free [to do what he likes].”

The “institutionalized contradiction between the ideals of radical democracy and their shifting patriarchal actualizations” (DOE, 366) unfortunately continues in the modern Western democracy, Schüssler Fiorenza argues, in the form of “fraternal capitalist patriarchy” (ibid., 364, original emphasis). Despite the claims that all its citizens are created equal and thus are entitled to freedom and the pursuit of happiness, there still remain patriarchal and sociopolitical stratifications. Natural differences inscribed in classical philosophy also exist in the modern Eurocentric political philosophy and theology. The inherent connection between colonial domination and racist, sexist, Eurocentric rule is well captured by Pablo Richard in his critique of Sepúlveda, a colonial theologian:

It is just and natural that prudent, honest, and humane men should rule over those who are not so … [and therefore] the Spaniards rule with perfect right over these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands who in prudence, intellect, virtue and humanity are as much inferior to the Spaniards as children to adults and women to men, since there exists between them as great a difference as that between wild and cruel races and races of greatest clemency, and between the most intemperate and the continent and temperate, and I would say between apes and men.


Then where does Schüssler Fiorenza see the radical democratic vision and its practice converge? It is in her vision of the *ekklēsia* of women.

The failure of social democracy and ecclesial democracy, I argue, has not been a failure of the radical democratic dream, but a failure of spiritual vision and political realization that has not yet overcome its patriarchal limitations. … In support of this democratic vision … theology must develop a vision for the future that can engage the church in these democratic struggles, sustaining the vision of justice, liberty, and well-being for all. The feminist notion of the *ekklēsia* of women, I suggest, can contribute to the fashioning of such a radical democratic vision and spiritual center of global dimensions. *(DOE, 354)*

Schüssler Fiorenza understands herself standing firmly in “a democratic suffrage tradition” of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, and Anna Julia Cooper. She argues that from the beginning the suffrage movement employed “democracy as a religious-biblical symbol in its struggle for justice” *(BNS, 176)* and that her radical democratic understanding of the *ekklēsia* of women “continues this nineteenth century suffragist tradition on the religious importance of democracy” *(ibid., 178)*.

Quoting Caroline Ramazanoglu, she emphasizes the importance of religion in endeavors of feminist movement.

New-wave feminists have tended to have little interest in religion. Yet religion can be the dominant factor in the personal identity and cultural location of millions of women around the world. If religion is one of the most important and immediate factors which enable a woman to know who she is, and to give meaning to her life, an international feminist movement cannot afford to ignore religion.59

The question arises, however, because of Schüssler Fiorenza’s prior commitment to the democratic causes and then “trac[ing] the emancipatory elements within the Jesus

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traditions” (*IMH*, xxxiv). Not only when she claims the necessity to “recover the radical democratic religious roots of the Christian church and faith” (*DOE*, 371), but also when she argues that the ongoing conflicts between kyriarchal socioeconomic structures and the democratic self-definition of people that existed long before the appearance of Christianity “have … determined the roots of Christianity from its very beginnings” (*IMH*, xxx), it is clear that, for Schüssler Fiorenza, the egalitarian ethos of democracy precedes its “particular constellation and configuration” (ibid., xxxiv) in Jesus’ teachings and is therefore not confined in them.

While Schüssler Fiorenza, with other feminists, thus takes specific suggestions for the family, the state, and the church, from democratic theory, Yoder finds the root of the problem of the liberalism’s overly developed dependence on democracy in Christendom. Comparing and contrasting these positions particularly in light of Jeffrey Stout’s study will lend some light to a better understanding of this issue. Schüssler Fiorenza sounds very much like Stout, when she declares that a reconstruction of early Christian communal self-understanding – the project of *In Memory of Her* – “is an active process moving toward greater equality, freedom, and responsibility, as well as toward communal relations free of domination” (*IMH*, xxxv). Her idea of how theology should be constructed – “I argue that theology, and theological education itself, is to be constructed as a transformative discursive practice which must position itself within the public space created by the logic of democracy” (*BSS*, 179) – also strongly resonates with Stout’s understanding of morality as “a way of thinking and talking (that is, a discursive social
practice)” (Stout, 240). He stresses that “The social practices that matter most directly
to democracy … are the discursive practices of ethical deliberation and political debate”
(ibid., 293).

In his book, Democracy and Tradition, Jeffrey Stout claims that “democracy is a
tradition” (ibid., 3). The main point that he wants to make is that “democratic questioning
and reason-giving are a sort of practice, one that involves and inculcates virtues,
including justice, and that becomes a tradition, like any social practice, when it manages
to sustain itself across generations” (ibid., 152). Throughout the book, he emphasizes the
importance of keeping discursive social practices open-ended and self-critical, rather than
authoritarian and indefeasible. He maintains that each of us should exercise the authority
that is defeasible in the process of discursive practices, “defeasible” in the sense

that we are both free to change our minds with respect to these specifications and
also in the sense that neither of our perspectives holds sway over the discourse
that transpires between us. But we cannot get by without taking a specific point of
view, and when we do this, we are bound to draw a distinction between “what is
correct and what is merely taken to be correct, between objective content and
subjective view of it.” (Ibid., 279)

In other words, his pragmatism reconceives authority “in nonauthoritarian terms,”
insisting “that deference [to authority] and defeasibility can go hand in hand” (ibid., 213).

A “spirit of self-critically open-ended inquiry” is what he seeks to preserve (ibid.,
253), because he believes that normative commitments embedded in activities held in
common in the civic nation “guide the discussion, but they are also constantly in dispute,
subject to revision, and not fully determinate” (ibid., 5). This evolving character of

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commitments keeps us from attempting to reduce them to any determinate rules or principles. Stout quotes the feminist theologian Rebecca Chopp: “democracy is never just a set of laws about equal and fair treatment. Rather it is an ongoing interpretation of itself, an ongoing production of new practices and narratives, of new values and forms of social and personal life that constitute a democracy.” Even though he employs quite a powerful argument to show the reductionist tendency of the new traditionalists, in fact this open-ended self-critical spirit of the tradition is what is commonly held by the latter. The only difference between the two camps is that the new traditionalists, especially Hauerwas, keep it inside the boundary of the faith community, while Stout urges them to open it up.

Refuting both “an antireligious form of liberalism” and “an authoritarian form of traditionalism” (Stout, 10), Stout seeks to present “an antitraditionalist conception of modern democracy as a tradition” (ibid., 204). Thus his pragmatism constitutes the philosophical space in which he can combine “democratic rebellion against hierarchy” together with “traditionalist love of virtue” (ibid., 13). The tasks Stout has taken to himself to accomplish this goal are already delineated above: to open up the liberal ethical discourses toward diverse religious positions and to attack the authoritarian and separatist postures of the “new traditionalists.” First, he attacks John Rawls’ notion of “reasonable person” with that of Hegel’s.

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According to Stout, Rawls holds “that our reasoning in the public forum should appeal strictly to ideals and principles that no reasonable person could reasonably reject” (ibid., 65). For Rawls, a “reasonable person” is someone who is “ready to propose principles and standards as fair terms of cooperation and to abide by them willingly, given the assurance that others will likewise do so” (ibid., 67). What he does with the distinction between the “reasonable person” and the “unreasonable person,” and between the “public reasoning” and the “private reasoning” (ibid.), is to preclude the right to express religious commitments “in the center of the political arena, where the most important questions are decided” (ibid., 68). It is in line with Richard Rorty’s contention that “in political discussion with those outside the relevant religious community, [religion] is a conversation-stopper” (ibid., 85).

Against Rawls’ Kantian, contractarian and static paradigm of the reasonable person, Stout presents Hegel’s more dynamic paradigm determined by his “expressive freedom.” Expressive freedom is “the freedom to transform both oneself and one’s social practices through a dialectical progression of novel performances and their consequences.” In the Hegelian sense, a reasonable person is “someone who is always in the process of transforming the inferential significance of the normative concepts at his or her disposal by applying them to new situations and problems” (ibid., 80). Instead of counting on the social contract which is based on “a free-standing conception of justice” (ibid., 68) as the basis of social cooperation, as Rawls does, Stout proposes the notion of

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62 While in Kant’s theoretical philosophy the faculty of the understanding (Verstand) works in the procedures of deliberative discourse, Hegel prefers “the more flexible, pragmatic, improvisational faculty of reason (Vernunft)” (Stout, 80-81).
democratic citizens who are “responsible, socially cooperative selves” (ibid., 82). These citizens ought to enjoy equal standing in political discourse, in their exercise of expressive freedom of personal convictions, including religious ones.

Having secured the ground for the theological voices to be heard in the public political arena, Stout now turns to the “new traditionalists” – John Milbank, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Stanley Hauerwas – and urges them to “a democratically engaged ethics of virtue that has been cleansed of antiliberal resentment” (ibid., 184), which he also calls the “ethics of democracy” (ibid., 190). He points out that while the new traditionalists (especially MacIntyre) accuse modern ethical discourse for lying “in virtually complete fragmentation” (ibid., 123), their resentment of the secular and downright rejection of liberalism makes things worse (ibid., 114-15). While you can find “discourse on the virtues permeating the ethos of modern democratic culture,” Stout retorts, the new traditionalists define “virtue ethics” too “narrowly, so that only a form of ethical discourse conforming closely to an Aristotelian or Thomistic framework qualifies” (ibid., 133). As indicated earlier, the ground on which he defies those narrowly defined virtue ethics is its authoritarian, hierarchical, and non-democratic character. He entreats the new traditionalists to come out of their reductionism (ibid., 137), separatism, and cultural alienation (ibid., 43), and to embrace non-reductive conception of liberal modernity.

Stout draws upon a feminist political philosopher, Susan Moller Okin’s critique of MacIntyre to show the problem of the new traditionalists’ reductionism. Moller Okin observes that MacIntyre uses two different senses of tradition. At times MacIntyre describes a tradition as “a defining context,” as something characterized “by deference
toward authoritative texts”; at other times he talks of “a tradition as ‘living,’ as a ‘not-yet-completed narrative,’ as an argument about the goods that constitute the tradition” (ibid., 135). She argues that feminism is a tradition in the second sense, if not one in the first sense. It is not hard to see how Stout utilizes this idea to back up his main thesis in his book, namely that democracy is a tradition. He notes that

Once the ambiguity of the term “tradition” is made plain, it becomes obvious that the debate over the new traditionalism is best construed not as a debate between traditional and modern varieties of ethical discourse, but rather as a debate involving at least two traditions or strands of modern ethical discourse: a tradition dedicated to a very narrow conception of how tradition ought ideally to operate and a tradition dedicated to the project of loosening up that conception democratically and dialogically. (Ibid., 136)

But what if the “ambiguity” is one of the genuine characteristics of tradition? What if the attempt to distinguish between the two senses itself constitutes the main problem? Let us take heed again (See pp. 90-91) to the way that Hauerwas talks about the reading of the Scripture, for example. He claims that a final and definitive status cannot be accorded to any one interpretation of the tradition that the canon mediates. You cannot think of a community without a tradition and the community keeps the tradition through interpretation, which means its constant adjustment. In its search of truth about the God of Jesus Christ, the Christian community needs to leave its interpretation of the Scripture open to a new understanding, which often means “the reappropriation of the tradition with a greater depth of understanding.”63 We can see that he talks about the openness that we need in regard to a tradition, which is similar to the second sense that Moller Okin outlines. But that openness is something within the bounds of “deference toward

authoritative texts.” You cannot ask a tradition to forfeit its authoritative texts in the name of abolishing the rigidity or narrowness that it seemingly has, since those texts are what has defined and sustained the tradition. As mentioned above, the same problem is detected in Schüssler Fiorenza’s appeal to democracy in pursuit of women’s liberation.

As Thomas W. Ogletree observes, for her, democratic structures are “the realization of the biblical vision of liberation,”⁶⁴ which displace patriarchy. She also draws upon Moller Okin to back up her idea. Moller Okin states,

> We have already concluded that the equality of women cannot be achieved in any political theory without the radical restructuring of the family. … If our aim is truly democratic society, or a thoroughly democratic theory, we must acknowledge that anything but a democratic family, with complete equality and mutual interdependence between the sexes, will be a severe impediment to this aim.⁶⁵

What Schüssler Fiorenza stresses is the reality that the Bible and biblical religion often serve to lead us to the opposite direction in the contemporary democratic society, by “reproducing ancient patriarchal structures of inequality and slave-like conditions in the family and the economy” (Discipleship, 136). Point of departure in her hermeneutical endeavors is “women’s experience in their struggle for liberation” (BNS, 13). As we pointed out earlier, she even derives the “canon” of her feminist critical theology of liberation from the contemporary struggle of women against oppressive systems of patriarchy and from its systematic explorations, not from the biblical writings.

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As Hauerwas indicates, the problem with liberalism, shown in this kind of loyalty to democracy, which we see both in Stout and Schüssler Fiorenza, is that while it offers some moral opportunities that should be pursued, it also “involves subtle temptations that can rob Jewish and Christian communities of their substance.” Hauerwas’ critique is closely related to Hays’ earlier observation of Schüssler Fiorenza’s biblical interpretation (See p. 158) that its undermining of the New Testament authority is so thorough that the biblical texts’ “liberating power would also be lost.”

Yoder uses the term “democracy,” even though quite differently from others, to refer to the process of decision making which he deems as one of the essential practices of the church and which gives everyone the floor through open dialogue and consensus. He finds the root of the problem of antichurchly and antireligious character of the liberalism’s overly developed dependence on democracy not in the characteristic of the vision of democracy in itself, but in the Christendom, as “the price paid for having entrusted reformation to governments” (PK, 23). The fusion, which started since Constantine between the ethics of messianic servanthood and the other discourse that professed the ruler as benefactor, he maintains, has been “replicated in an uncritical, undefined fusion with ‘democracy.’” Though it is the least oppressive one, democracy as

67 John Howard Yoder, The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical, ed. Michael G. Cartwright (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania/ Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 1998), 368. The boldness that enables Yoder to use the modern secular terms which are “the property of the liberal establishment” – such as “egalitarianism,” “democracy,” and “socialism” – comes from the radicality of his Christian vision. It is his attempt to “renew daily the action of preempting the extant vocabulary, rendering every creature subject to God’s rule in Christ” (RP, 370).
68 Yoder, The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 23. Subsequent quotations from this book will be noted as (PK, 23), for example.
a civil order is still a form of “oligarchy,” governed by an elite, standing on the presupposition of coercive control (ibid., 158-59). Thus you cannot identify the language of the ruler’s moral claims with that of your Christian discipleship or your servanthood. To Yoder, a paradigmatic community maintains the practice of giving the weaker members the floor to speak, and it is democracy (See ps. 190 and 246).

Here, we have to remember that Hauerwas’ and Yoder’s theological and ethical arguments have been directed to Christians. As noted earlier, with Yoder, Hauerwas criticizes the Protestant liberalism that it has been “deeply committed to the project of subjecting Christian discourse to the criteria of modernity,” which turns our Christian faith “into a system of beliefs that can be or is universally known without the conversion.” Stout acknowledges that Hauerwas’ “problem has never been with secular political liberals but rather with the widespread assumption shared by many Christians that political liberalism ought to shape the agenda, if not the very life, of the church.” He also knows that is why “the principal targets of [Hauerwas’] criticism” over the last two decades have been “twentieth-century theologians who have dedicated themselves to social justice and sought to make the church safe for democratic aspirations” (Stout, 140). But still, with all the attractive ideas and suggestions that he has, Stout is not aware that (I

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69 We find a similar critique of modern democracy in Schüssler Fiorenza, too. She continuously argues that “modern capitalist democracy is modeled after the classical ideal of patriarchal democracy” and that “it perpetuates the contradiction between patriarchal practices and democratic self-understandings inscribed in the discourses of democracy in antiquity.” She goes on to point out that the actualized form of democracy is “the government of the few over the many,” which is reminiscent of Yoder’s critique of democracy as oligarchy. See BSS, 121.
70 Hauerwas, a class handout in the Spring, 2000, 33.
71 Hauerwas, God, Medicine, and Suffering, 53. Emphasis added.
assume, because of his lack of faith)\textsuperscript{73} he might be asking the new traditionalists to do what they criticize the other theologians for having been doing: to give priority to the democratic cause and to “subject Christian discourse to [that] criteria.”

Christians do not resort to democracy, because we have discipleship. We find in Yoder’s theology the faithful openness to new theological insights. One of the points of reconciliation between Yoder and Schüessler Fiorenza, for example, can be found in Yoder’s antipatriarchal argument of “the universalization of giftedness” within the Christian community, which is closely related to what he calls “democracy” (RP, 368). It is notable that in his Body Politics, Yoder finds the vision which sees the Haustafeln as God’s reaffirmation of the creation order as something that is “of course conservative and patriarchal” (BP, 26). He is constantly critical of “nongalitarian” practices of the church that restrict charismatic roles to male Christians.\textsuperscript{74} He believes that God “empower[s] each member” – male or female – “differently although equally” (BP, 55). “The universalization of giftedness,” Yoder asserts, “destroys patriarchalism” and “equalizes” (RP, 368).

His vision of the life of the baptized in their community is something in which all the “status differences – whether sexual, ritual, ethnic, or economic – are overarched in a new reality” (BP, 37). He even accuses the mainline Christian understanding which, from the time of Constantine until as late as a century ago, has pointed to the direction of

\textsuperscript{73} Stout doesn’t share Christian faith, as shown on ps. 170, 267, and 269. He admits that “[p]ragmatism comes into conflict with theology in ethical theory mainly at those points where someone asserts that the truth-claiming function of ethics depends, for its objectivity, on positing a transcendent and perfect being” (268).

division between peoples, nations, and classes; of men’s rule over women; and of Europeans’ rule over the globe, on the grounds of creation and providence. Radical discipleship is that in which we find all these divisions and oppressions overcome and all our aspirations fulfilled. Thus the priority that Schüssler Fiorenza gives to democracy in her pursuit of “the community of co-equal discipleship” over against the authority of the Bible and Christian discipleship modeled after Christ’s subordination should be questioned.
Chapter 4. John Howard Yoder’s Critique and Beyond

The discussion of the Bible’s authority and its interpretations, as has been shown from the Introduction onward, is profoundly complex. Especially when it involves serious social issues such as slavery and women’s oppression, conflicting views can rage against each other amidst their common claim of relying on the Scripture. The aforementioned remark of Charles Hodge’s on the subject of the *Haustafeln*, that is, that the submission of slaves to their masters, of children to their parents, and of wives to their husbands, “always” rests “on the divine will” which “is necessarily the ultimate ground and rule of all moral obligation,”¹ is a good example of such blind appeals to the Book to make the specific party’s case. While Yoder’s reading of the *Haustafeln* is doubtful on historical ground, it is justifiable on theological ground. His moves are fundamentally theological ones, which show that Jesus’ exemplification of subordination provides the model of Christian subordination that can resist exploitation. This chapter will seek in the seemingly unrelated studies theological convictions that are helpful in understanding his reading of the *Haustafeln*.

As mentioned in the Introduction, debates on slavery have posed enormous challenges on the understanding of the household codes. The reason we continue that discussion is not to repeat the same mistakes on the issue of women’s oppression as were made on slavery. The following two studies on slavery offer profound observations for the current project. Mark A. Noll’s recent analysis of American slavery debates provides a refreshing insight for those who struggle with the issue of biblical interpretations.

Through careful study of the opinions of “the vast majority of Americans” “expressed in some public way” on the conflict of the Civil War (CW, 9) and through the research on the views of both the Protestants and Catholics outside the U.S. on the same subject, Noll offers an intriguing finding of the synthesis that was at work behind the Civil War. Also, Dale B. Martin’s study of slavery as salvation throws a unique and convincing light on the complexity of slavery in the Greco-Roman culture. While acknowledging the offense of slavery, he nonetheless is successful in presenting “the positive, soteriological use of slavery as a symbol for the Christian’s relationship to God or Christ” (SS, xiv). These two studies, I believe, will pave the road toward a better understanding of the Haustafeln in light of Yoder’s nonviolence. So they will be dealt with in the first section of this chapter.

The second section will be given to the discussion of the kingdom ethic, which definitely can be said to represent Yoder’s nonviolent ethic. Two essays stand out as the ones that command outstanding insights on the kingdom of God and on those who live under God’s reign, which deeply resonate with Yoder’s views on them. Rowan Williams’ book, Resurrection, presents Jesus’ resurrection after the crucifixion as “God’s judgement pronounced against human judgement” (Resurrection, 4). Jesus is “a judge who will not condemn” (ibid., 8), because God’s righteousness “acts only to restore”

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2 Mark A. Noll, The Civil War as a Theological Crisis (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 9. Further quotations from this book will be indicated as (CW, 9) in the text.
4 Rowan Williams, Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel, 2nd edition (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2002), 4. Subsequent quotations from the book will be shown as (Resurrection, 4) in the text.
(ibid., 13). The picture of the Heavenly City in Bernd Wannenwetsch’s “Representing the Absent in the City” offers itself as an excellent “prolegomena to a negative political theology” (Abscent, 167). In Revelation 21, Wannenwetsch focuses on the absent in the New City – no shut gates, no sun and moon, and no temple – and finds “representing the absent” as the preferable mode “of the theological construal of the New City’s import for the earthly one” to “representing the present” (ibid., 191-192).

Thus buttressed by these accounts, we will be ready to discuss Yoder’s understanding of nonviolence and read the Haustafeln in its light. Especially when it is juxtaposed to Paul Ramsey’s just war thought, Yoder’s pacifism makes itself more conspicuous. Against the just war thinking which is “counter to the scriptures” (PK, 76), and which deals with the world “by the ways of violence and its power,” Yoder chooses to do it “by the way of the cross.” Seen in this light, “revolutionary subordination” of the Haustafeln might turn out to be “God’s foolishness” which “is wiser than human wisdom” and “God’s weakness” which is “stronger than human strength” (1 Cor. 1:25).

1. American Civil War and Greco-Roman Slavery Revisited

(A) Civil War and “the Synthesis” at Work

It is still a haunting issue to Americans and to people outside the country that a nation which had been built on its claim of reliance on the Scripture was divided into two

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5 Bernd Wannenwetsch, “Representing the Absent in the City,” God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas, eds. L. Gregory Jones, Reinhard Hütter, and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 167. Subsequent quotations from the book will be shown as (Absent, 167) in the text.
6 McClendon, Systematic Theology: Ethics, 74.
over slavery and the two factions were killing each other. It is appalling that the warring combatants both on the side of proslavery and on the side that was opposed to it sought the sanction and support of their positions in the biblical texts and could find the opposite results from them. Mark A. Noll starts his book, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, with a sobering realization that “The Book that made the nation was destroying the nation; the nation that had taken to the Book was rescued not by the Book but by the force of arms” (*CW*, 8).

Noll seeks to understand why it was the case. The agony concerning the issue is well expressed in his remark that follows.

On no subject was the cacophony more obvious, and more painful, than on the question of the Bible and slavery. On no subject did the cacophony touch such agonizing depths as on the question of God’s providential designs for the United States of America. (Ibid., 1)

This statement is important in that it is closely related to the declared purpose of the book: “to explain why clashes over the meaning of the Bible and the workings of providence, which grew directly out of the nation’s broader history before the Civil War, revealed a significant theological crisis” (ibid., 6). The 1860s’ “debates over what the Bible taught and what God was doing in history” were natural outgrowth of how they had perceived Scripture and providence in the decades preceding the war (ibid., 9). Then, what defined “the nation’s broader history before the Civil War” that contributed to the fatal clashes between North and South?

Noll identifies various factors that had been at work making the Civil War a theological crisis. He presents them in different ways, but at one point he puts them
together under the name of “the hard-earned synthesis of Christianity, republicanism, common sense, the Enlightenment, and American covenantal exceptionalism” (ibid., 91).

He argues that “this was exactly the framework” in which the workings of providence were described by both elites and nonelites during the war (ibid.). It is interesting to note that the Europeans were leaving behind at the time the certainties of this framework which Noll calls elsewhere “the national-Protestant-Enlightenment synthesis” (ibid., 159).

He traces the forging of this evangelical-Enlightenment synthesis in the United States to the period 1776 to 1815, and adds that it was already being criticized before the Civil War by Christian romantics such as John Williamson Nevin, Henry Boynton Smith, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Horace Bushnell.

Examining the factors that form the above synthesis, along with others that contributed to the crisis, would be beneficial to understanding “why in 1860 battles over the Bible were so important, why divergent views of providence cut so deeply, and why foreign commentary on the Civil War illuminated so much about the general character of religion in America” (ibid., 29). However, these factors are so intricately connected to one another that it is almost impossible to talk about them individually. Therefore, rather than focusing on each factor, seeing how these factors worked closely together will benefit us in our efforts not to fall into similar mistakes in the interpretation of the household codes. It starts with the strong religiosity of Americans before and during the Civil War. It is attested to by James McPherson who writes, “Civil War armies were,
arguably, the most religious in American history.” It is in line with La Civiltà cattolica’s observation in its article in February 1861, “Disunion in the United States”:

[S]uddenly both parties have become theologians, the one side quoting the Pentateuch to justify slavery, the other side quoting the gospel to condemn it: … the people of the thirty-three United States, who are eminently and essentially political, cannot discuss a political matter without quoting the Old and New Testaments.

As two significant realities about American religion in 1860, Noll asserts that religion then was the most important center of value at work in the country and that it was mostly Protestant. While a third or two-fifths of Americans claimed membership in churches, their attendance almost doubled the rate of membership in that period. Over 10 million Americans, which constituted about 40% of the total population, were sympathetic to evangelical Christianity during the mid-1850s. As Richard Carwardine writes, “This was the largest, and most formidable, subculture in American society.”

Using intriguing statistical comparisons, Noll summarizes the great significance of religion in the 1860s in America as “its wide dispersion,” “its overwhelming presence” over against other institutions of government, culture, education, and the media, and “its [overwhelmingly Protestant] makeup” (CW, 13).

What accounts for the immense significance that debates over the interpretation of the Bible had in the United States in 1860, Noll argues, was not just the prevalence of Protestants “with their inherited loyalty to Scripture as ultimate religious authority” but

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also “the specific type of Protestants” – namely, evangelical – that had occupied the religious ground in the new American nation (ibid., 22). When theologians and preachers clashed over the meaning of the Bible, “the stakes were anything but merely academic or privately sectarian” (ibid.) due to the way American culture had been shaped since the Revolution. What was being challenged in the conflict was trust in the Bible as a divine revelation, which had been “one of the fundamental supports of American civilization.”

Now, Noll’s description of the climate encompasses different factors working together, making conflict over Scripture “so politically, socially, morally, and culturally – as well as religiously – explosive” on the eve of sectional warfare:

By 1860 a substantial majority of articulate Americans had come to hold a number of corollary beliefs about the Bible – specifically, that besides its religious uses, it also promoted republican political theory, that it was accessible to every sentient person, that it defined the glories of liberty, that it opposed the tyranny of inherited religious authority, that it forecast the providential destiny of the United States, and that it was best interpreted by the common sense of ordinary people. (Ibid.)

As reflected above, Noll points out a few characteristics of the ideological journey of the nation from 1776 to 1861 that led to all this: anti-traditionalism as a ground of forming the new country; republicanism\(^\text{10}\) embraced by Americans as a reaction to their European ancestors who regarded it as equal to religious heresy; their trust in written instruments of government, especially the U.S. Constitution, rather than in hereditary power or the aristocratic ordering of society; ideological evolution towards more.

\(^{10}\) While acknowledging the difficulty in defining republicanism, Noll offers its definition as most Americans held through the time of the Civil War: “on the one side, virtuous character and action linked with political liberty and the flourishing of society and, on the other side, vice (usually defined as luxury, indolence, or deceit in high places) linked with corruption in government, tyrannical politics, and the collapse of social order” (\textit{CW}, 23).
democratic, Enlightenment convictions that they had the power in themselves to know
the workings of the world in terms of cause and effect, to act accordingly, and to discover
the true meaning of the Scripture; creation of an American culture which was a bottom-
up process, filling “the vacuum created by discredited intellectual traditions” with
“commonsense forms of reasoning” (ibid., 26); unprecedented ecclesiastical expansion
through evangelical revival from 1790 to 1860, which helped messages from churches to
exert not only religious but also political influence; and, finally, the great schisms
experienced by the major Protestant churches – the Baptists and the Methodists – in 1844,
which proved to be the greatest source of danger to the country, as John C. Calhoun
spoke before the U.S. Senate in 1850 that when the great Protestant denominations would
break, the national bonds also break, and when that happens, “nothing will be left to hold
the States together except force.”

The fact that the religious sectors had political influence as well has everything to
do with the alliance among evangelical Protestantism, republicanism, and American
covenantal exceptionalism, which is expressed in Noll’s following statement. After
enumerating fundamental convictions and religious practices that evangelical Protestants
shared, such as exalting the Bible instead of tradition or clerical elites as the basic
religious authority, and being skeptical about received religious authority, he writes:

American theologians never talked about these practices in naked religious terms.
Rather, the evangelical Protestantism that dominated public life at mid-century
had gained its place because it successfully clothed the Christian faith in the

the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States (New York: D. Appleton, 1854), 557-58.
Recited in CW, 28.
preeminent ideological dress of the new Republic. In particular, it had vivified, ennobled, and lent transcendent value to republican political assumptions, democratic convictions about social organization, scientific reasoning pitched to common sense, and belief in the unique, providential destiny of the United States. (CW, 18)

What resulted from this reigning alliance was the exceptionally confident assurance with which both proslavery and abolitionist appeals were made. Such convictions were illustrated by countless believers during the Civil War, who assumed moral or spiritual perception to be “crystal clear” and the capacity of moral action to lie “entirely within the grasp of well-meaning individuals” (ibid., 19).

Noll finds the clearest illustration of “the Christian-Enlightenment marriage” in the widespread belief that it was simple to understand things (ibid., 20). Religious thinkers claimed with confidence that they could describe the simplicity of God’s action in the world (ibid., 21). What baffle modern readers are the “bold biblicism and self-contradicting audacity” (ibid., 63) of preachers of North and South, who claimed that “The Bible … was clear as a bell about slavery,” but to whom it spoke very differently (ibid., 2). Henry Ward Beecher, for example, urged his Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York, in January, 1861 on a day of national fasting to repent for the evil of slavery, which was “the most alarming and most fertile cause of national sin.” The Bible could not speak any more clearly about this great evil, so that “Where the Bible has been in the household, and read without hindrance by parents and children together,” slavery had no chance to survive.¹² Six weeks earlier on a fasting day of South Carolina,

with the same level of confidence, James Henley Thornwell addressed his Presbyterian congregation in Columbia about the propriety of slavery system in the eyes of God, asserting that slavery was the “good and merciful” way of organizing labor “which Providence has given us.”

As represented by these two renowned preachers, both sides were “convinced that they had discovered the mind of the Lord” (*CW*, 64). The sureties of the Enlightenment backed American believers’ certainties of their religion with which they, “as a divinely chosen people,” “offered direct, simple answers to explain the war” (ibid., 81). This conviction “that God was in control and that they could understand clearly why God was acting the way he did” was shared not only by the elite theologians but also by ordinary ministers and the laity (ibid., 86). Of course, there was a small minority who were holdouts against “this chorus of certainty” (ibid.), against this kind of “strong but religiously divided self-assurance” (ibid., 161), such as Edward Porter Alexander, chief of the South’s artillery, and Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln in particular offered “a complex picture of God’s rule over the world and a morally nuanced picture of America’s destiny” in contrast to “a thin, simple view of God’s providence and a morally juvenile view of the nation and its fate” of the recognized religious leaders (ibid., 87-88). The minority did not abandon a firm belief in God but began to question human ability to understand the divine will.

Their reservation was matched by the opinions of non-Americans which amounted as a whole to be “a massive rebuke to the reigning American synthesis” (ibid., 13).

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90). Once having shared the certainties of Christian-Enlightenment thinking, the Europeans were now leaving it behind. They often saw what Americans could not see themselves. Particularly, they showed unusual clarity in perceiving “that American disputes over the Bible and slavery grew as much from broad interpretive assumptions brought to the text as from detailed exegesis of the Book” (ibid., 95). Despite the differences in the opinions that Protestants and Catholics showed concerning the situation of the American slavery and the Civil War,14 their common observations were “general doubts about the North” coupled with “stiff antislavery convictions” (CW, 114). With their strikingly “weak engagement with the Bible” (ibid., 117), foreign Protestants quickly dismissed biblical proslavery arguments and appealed to Christian consciousness instead.

Most noteworthy were the three conclusions that non-Americans made as “broader social, cultural, and religious circumstances that shaped interpretations of Scripture” in America during the conflict (ibid., 121): the materialism (“the almighty power of the dollar,” ibid., 114), American slavery as racially defined slavery, and lack of higher authority for biblical interpretation. The phenomena of the painful, agonizing cacophony between the North and the South are summed up: “interests dictate interpretations” (ibid., 2). It was seen by outsiders as the conflict between the North’s capitalist individualism and the slave South’s patriarchal communalism (ibid., 52). As

14 Noll summarizes “two divergent streams of foreign commentary”: first, European and Canadian Protestants and Europe’s liberal Roman Catholics showed “much stronger opinions against slavery than for the North”; and second, conservative European Catholics asserted “forthrightly that the Bible does sanction slavery” and at the same time they challenged “American ideals of individual liberty” (CW, 7, original emphasis).
viewed in the eyes of Italian Jesuits, who offered “the gold standard for Catholic commentary” on the whole issue around the American Civil War in their biweekly journal *La Civiltà cattolica* (Catholic Civilization) (ibid., 145), “different American factions were using the Scriptures to mask their economic and political interests” (ibid., 154). Foreigners saw clearly “that American material interests exerted a strong influence on American theological conclusions” (ibid., 158).

This point is confirmed by the discovery that despite the theologians’ bold confidence in their own understanding of providence before and after the war, “they were in almost all cases powerless to convince others that they were correct” (ibid., 92). In other words, even after the heated debates, they basically stayed in their original positions, without persuading or being persuaded by the others. For example, Count Agénor Étienne de Gasparin (1810–71), a French Protestant statesman, noted that “the power of environment over religious convictions” had blinded the South from seeing “the incompatibility between true Christianity and slavery” (ibid., 100). Under the guise of theological convictions, different social groups’ whims, interests, selfishness were actually controlling the matters.

Philip Schaff, a native Swiss who taught at the German Reformed seminary in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, pointed out in the *Mercersburg Review* in April 1861 the connection between race and slavery in America: “*The negro question lies far deeper than the slavery question.*”¹⁵ Gasparin emphasized the same point: “American slavery, which its friends so strangely claim to place under the protection of the Apostles, has

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nothing in common with that of which the Apostles had cognizance. … Slavery, in the United States, is founded on color, it is negro slavery.”¹⁶ Noll notes “whites’ inability to regard African Americans as fully human” which led them to ignore the whole time “that slavery in the Bible was colorblind” (CW, 73).

So seriously fixed in the minds of white Americans, including most abolitionists, was the certainty of black racial inferiority that it overwhelmed biblical testimony about race, even though most Protestant Americans claimed that Scripture was in fact their supreme authority in adjudicating such matters. (Ibid.)

In the South, a slave was treated like “a black pest” (ibid., 142) or “a beast” (ibid., 148). As Laura Mitchell describes, “Even the most committed abolitionists often had trouble perceiving blacks as ‘beloved’ brothers.”¹⁷ The whites who embraced Lincoln’s emancipation plan, like Orestes Brownson, still “refused to consider blacks as potential equals in society or politics” (CW, 129).

The differences between American and non-American Protestants in their interpretations of the Bible are telling and especially pertinent to the present study. While trust in the Bible was virtually the same, traditional orthodox Christianity outside the United States was not particularly republican or democratic as that in America. Governed by inherited communities of interpretation, it tended to be “wary of claims for autonomous and freshly proposed understandings of the Gospel.” Over against America’s “individualistic or eccentric appeals to the Bible” that relied on republican and

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democratic common sense, biblical interpretation outside the United States respected history, tradition, and formal learning, which made it more of “a corporate exercise.” Also, in Europe there was no such noticeable connection “between ardent abolitionism and a willingness to abandon the Bible” as there was in America (ibid., 122). Even though the Bible was as foundational for them, evangelical and orthodox Christians in Europe were usually the strongest opponents of slavery. And finally, British Protestants, for example, showed strong “resistance to overtly literal interpretations of Scripture” (ibid., 123).

This critique of America’s individualistic, commonsensical, literalist exegesis of Scripture was accentuated by the Catholics outside the U.S., especially conservative Catholics. They questioned whether “expanding liberal democracy,” “unfettered economic freedom,” “Protestant American individualism,” along with the absence of higher authority for interpretation were responsible for confusion in biblical interpretations (ibid., 125). Led by Gregory XVI and Pius IX, conservative Catholics were skeptical about “the supposed virtues of modern society” – including democracy replacing paternal authority, unrestricted capitalism replacing corporate economic solidarity, free speech replacing disciplined public utterance, liberty of conscience replacing consciences bent to the truth, public schools replacing religious education, denominational pluralism replacing Catholic supremacy, and the separation of church and state replacing a well-regulated cooperation of church and state (ibid., 138). You do not have to agree with them on everything to see the validity of their criticism.
Joseph Edmund Jörg, editor of Germany’s *Historisch-politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland* (Historical and Political Newspaper for Catholic Germany), recognized that “from the perspective of the slave question,” the Civil War was “a formal war of religion.” He pointed out the prevalence of “arbitrary theology” and “extremes of subjective Christianity” (*CW*, 143) with which no common meaning could be discovered in the Bible. As a journal in Berlin, the *Protestantische Kirchenzeitung für das evangelische Deutschland* (Protestant Church Newspaper for Evangelical Germany), commented, “Americans often claimed to be following a higher law even when that higher law turned out to be only a personal persuasion” (ibid., 110). German cardinal archbishop Karl August von Reisach also contended that with vaunted Protestant religious individualism in which “the individual was independent and sovereign,” the biblical texts were “explained by each one according to his own will” (ibid., 151), leading the nation to fateful consequences.

The new traditionalists’ emphasis on tradition, Yoder’s warning against the modern reader’s sovereignty in biblical interpretation, Yoder’s and Hauerwas’ disapproval of modern liberalism’s overly developed reliance on democracy, all resonate with Noll’s accounts. Acknowledging “a glaring weakness” reflected in the “recourse to arms for civil war,” Noll calls attention to “the need for some overarching authority to pacify moral disputes before they turned violent” (ibid., 158). How, then, are we supposed to read and interpret the *Haustafeln*? Now, turning our attention to the issue of

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slavery itself in the Greco-Roman culture, especially to its more nuanced meaning as salvation, would be beneficial to the sound reading of the *Haustafel* texts.

(B) Greco-Roman Slavery and Salvation

As Noll has shown in his study of the Civil War as a theological crisis “how tightly American religious convictions were bound to general patterns of American life” (*CW*, 159), Dale B. Martin as successfully presents a thoughtful study of the metaphor of slavery in Pauline Christianity in his book, *Slavery as Salvation*, showing how inextricably religious language is intertwined “with social structures, ideological constructs, and rhetorical strategies of the society at large” (*SS*, xiv). Defying any “monolithic, oversimplified” explanation of the concept of slavery of Greece or Rome (ibid., xv), Martin seeks to show complexities of slavery and of Paul’s arguments especially when he uses the metaphor of slavery in them.

The common notion of slavery as “an oppressive and exploitative institution” is acknowledged at the outset, which gave the owners “the right to bind, torture, or kill their slaves” (ibid., xiii). Slavery was not a benevolent institution, as some modern scholars want to prove. Martin cautions the reader not to take his attempt to emphasize the complexity of Roman slavery as a defense of that institution (*SS*, 1 n. 1). Delving into the early Christian use of slavery as a metaphor, Martin has discovered that to the early

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19 As books that are along these lines, Martin mentions Barrow, *Slavery in the Roman Empire* and Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man* (*SS*, 1 n. 1).
Christians, who were hellenized, romanized urban people, the term slavery to Christ or God represented not only obedience or humility but also salvation. The question how slavery informed their metaphorical appropriation of slave language can be answered by attending to a unique reality experienced by a small but significant minority of slaves.

Managerial slaves, who were higher up in the slave hierarchy as opposed to those who held lowly, menial positions, enjoyed “a fair amount of power and influence” (SS, 15). Different social groups – slave, freed and free persons – “merged in daily life” a great deal due to frequent manumissions and unions between the groups (ibid., 3). In that social context, even though slave marriages were not legally recognized, the conventions of funerary epitaphs and inscriptions show that slaves did maintain a normal family structure of the surrounding society. Also, while Roman law prohibited slaves from owning anything, certain slaves controlled and possessed substantial amount of money. Furthermore, any free person’s job was open to slaves with identical activities and wages: such as book publishing, business, clerical occupations, entertainment, medicine, teaching, philosophy, etc. (ibid., 11). As a result, these highly visible slaves’ informal social status was “ambiguous and conflicted with their legal status” (ibid., 15).

“An all-pervasive patronal ideology” (ibid., 26) played an important role in the social mobility that those slaves had available. Through the patron-client relationship, a powerful patron provided his slave-client with financial benefits along with legal

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protection, education, and citizenship. In return, the patron received honor as the chief benefit from all these favors. The patron’s high rank was evidenced by “a large entourage of clients, freedmen, and slaves tagging after [him] all over town” (ibid., 24). Because “the slave, especially the slave agent or manager, was viewed as an extension of the owner’s very person” (ibid., 20), the slave enjoyed this “status-by-association” (ibid., 48). When they exerted influence, they knew “that their influence derived from that of their owners” (ibid., 18).

Martin shows that lower-status persons were aware “that slavery could result in social integration and mobility” with a possible “order of ascending status”: servers, underlings or helpers, stewards, and financial managers. For women, concubines and emancipated female slaves ranked just below wives (ibid., 34). Using the example of Quintus Maecius Cleogenes, Martin argues that “in Corinth, a slave could hope to rise high enough to marry the master’s granddaughter” after being freed “even within an important family” (ibid., 32). The society in general knew little mobility but these slaves who were connected to someone in power enjoyed the upward mobility. Therefore, “in Greco-Roman society it mattered less that one was a slave than whose slave one was” (ibid., 132; see also 35). There was even evidence of “actual voluntary enslavement for social advancement” (ibid., 41), because of the surpassing benefits from being a slave of someone in power than from the status of an obscure freeman.

This successful slave theme in literature and actuality was resented by people of the upper class, such as Juvenal, Martial, and Athenaeus, whose fear of lower-class social mobility was well expressed in the traditional axiom “slave today, citizen tomorrow”
(ibid., 38). However, Martin emphasizes that it reflected the upper-class fear of social climbing rather than social fact, because the society was characterized by “a firm, static pyramid of legally mandated statuses, a rigid hierarchy” (ibid., 42). In actuality, people who experienced real social mobility in the Roman Empire were few (ibid.) and, ironically, patronal ideology which allowed the social mobility of those highly visible slaves served at the same time to censure social fluctuation (ibid., 147). Slave-clients “were … supposed to stay within their place in the system” (ibid., 26).

This ideology of regarding slaves as “tools” but giving enough “stimulus” so that they would stay in their places contentedly and work for the interests of the patron (ibid., 27) was named by Gerd Theissen as “love-patriarchalism” and by Martin “benevolent patriarchalism” (ibid., 128). Martin attests to David Balch’s point21 by saying “so little evidence exists of revolutionary sentiment and activity among slaves” (SS, 29). “This pairing of kindness and strictness” of the patronal structure and ideology “had an antirevolutionary function” and “mitigated antihierarchical sentiment.” Martin continues,

The strength of the patron-client structure and its accompanying patronal ideology solidified the hierarchical and authoritarian social forms of the empire. The structure discouraged class consciousness and solidarity from developing among the lower classes along horizontal lines. (Ibid.) He also adds to the common argument of scholars: that “the institution of slavery itself was never really questioned” (ibid., 42).

Now everything that has been presented so far points to an understanding of Paul’s use of slavery language and his theological position. While Paul uses slavery as a

21 See Balch (1981), 106.
metaphor in many ways – salvation as the deliverance from slavery, slavery as a metaphor for unconditional obedience, for one’s relationship to God, or for ministry to God or to other Christians – Martin’s focus is on another, that is, the use of “slave of Christ” as an authoritative title for leaders and as a symbolization of “Christian salvation based on upward mobility and power by association” (ibid., 50-51). He stresses that the use of “slave of Christ” as a title of leadership was not Paul’s invention (ibid., 52) but was a recognized designation of leadership in early Christianity (ibid., 82). Rather than being heard as self-effacing or humiliating, “the phrase slave of Christ would have carried, to all but the upper levels of the society, meanings … of authority and power” (ibid., 56, original emphasis).

Then, what kind of authority and power did it carry? Martin affirms that this use of the phrase shows “how firmly early Christian groups were tied to the patronal structure of society” (ibid., 58). Then, does it mean that the Christian movement was basically patriarchal? Martin’s contention is that “there was no early egalitarian stage of early Christianity followed by a hierarchical stage” (ibid., 59), as Theissen maintains (ibid., 127). “Rather,” he argues, “it is much more likely that egalitarian and patronal symbol systems were two different ways of thinking about the structure of the movement from the beginning” (ibid., 59). This explanation makes better sense than the arguments that there was something close to a clear-cut egalitarianism which then got compromised and corrupted by the later patriarchal backlash. Instead, Jesus’ kingdom message came into a patriarchal society in the midst of which his followers have sought to envision and
embody it in their lives. I believe that it is why Yoder is reluctant to see the gap between Jesus and Paul/Peter.

In the same vein, Martin asserts that painting Paul either as “a visionary egalitarian” or as “a patriarchal conservative” is incorrect (ibid., 141). Opposed to Theissen’s view that “Paul himself advocates love-patriarchalism” (ibid., 127), Martin’s analysis concludes that he counters and rejects it (ibid., 129, 140). Paul’s self-portrayal as Christ’s managerial slave and a populist – in the demagogue model, leadership was pictured as “enslavement to the many or leadership from below” (ibid., 92) – is a clear rejection of the idea of “the leader as the benevolent, patriarchal wise man” (ibid., 118). Paul “uses patriarchal rhetoric to make an antipatriarchal point” (ibid., 141). While he never seeks to reject the actual institution of slavery, he “attempts a theological undermining of the difference between master and slave” (ibid., 142).

By depicting himself as Christ’s slave who has authority and then offering himself as a “model for the voluntary self-abasement of a leader,” especially in 1 Cor. 9, Paul is using the common slavery language of early Christianity to make “an ethical demand based on his theology of the cross” (ibid., 132). The strong are challenged to follow Paul’s example of social self-lowering, which is motivated by “the status reversal significance of the cross” (ibid., 141). This call away from patriarchal leadership based on normal social position and normal status hierarchy to a new model of leadership – in which the power is shifted and the authority is a derived one – was a radical one, disturbing and unacceptable to Greeks and Romans “whose symbolic universe was more informed by benevolent patriarchalism” (ibid., 128).
Asserting that the ultimate goal of Paul’s “argument that the strong submit to the weak” was church unity, Martin offers the following observation:

Within benevolent patriarchalism, the theme of unity was quite popular, but in that ideology the unity was achieved by maintaining normal status hierarchy and convincing those on the bottom to resign themselves happily to their protected inferiority. In contrast, Paul sides with those on the bottom of the social scale, and, in a move perceived as radical in his day, he calls on other higher-status Christians also to give up their own interests and to identify themselves with the interests of those Christians of lower status. Paul does not advocate social revolution; but he does deconstruct the presuppositions that make hierarchical structure unassailable. Though allowing, for the most part, the patriarchal structure to stand, Paul undermines the ideological supports for that structure with his labor and rhetoric. (Ibid., 148)

Paul’s own “status inconsistency” (ibid., 42), this “more subtle, ambiguous authority” that Martin sees he advocates (ibid., 135), and Sarah Coakley’s “power-in-vulnerability” that we will talk about in the conclusion, are all in line with the kingdom ethic that we will look at in the next section, and with Yoder’s reading of the Haustafeln as nonviolent revolutionary subordination.

2. The Ethic of the Kingdom People

(A) Resurrection and a New Humanity

In addition to Mark Noll’s and Dale Martin’s studies, Rowan Williams’ book on how “the resurrection,” the generative event of the church, “is always gospel and never threat” (Resurrection, xv) sheds an extraordinary light upon our reading of the Haustafeln with Yoder. The resurrection of Jesus, who was deserted and executed, has opened up the path to the transcendence of the oppressive “‘master-slave’ relationship” (ibid., 11) that

22 Meeks (2003), 22-23, 54-55.
had characterized the world and whose vestiges the *Haustafeln* have been charged of keeping. Human history has been “a history of oppression and victimization,” a history of “condemnatory and excluding violence,” with “structures of mutual rejection and fear” (ibid., 18). In a “universal situation of disaster,” Walter Kasper observes, “every attempt to alter this situation is itself subject to the conditions created by the disaster. The result is an unending satanic cycle of guilt and revenge, violence and counterviolence.”

Jesus, the victim of violence and rejection of humanity, rose again from the dead and returned as the one who judges human judgment and who condemns human condemnation (*Resurrection*, 4, 21).

What makes this reversal more profound and startling beyond the reversal of the judged into the judge is the character of Jesus’ judgment: his is “the merciful and transforming judgement” (ibid., 10). His exaltation is not a threat but promise and hope (ibid., 3). His resurrection signifies the release of humanity from “the pendulum swing of attack and revenge,” from “the deadly circularity of oppression,” from the “vicious spiral” and “vortex of destructiveness” (ibid., 9, 12, 19, 35). As L. Gregory Jones maintains, “Christ’s judgment … is wholly in the service of mercy, reconciliation and new life. … Through God’s eschatological judgment of grace, human brokenness is overcome and communion is restored.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes in *Life Together*, “God binds elements together in the breaking, creates community in the separation, grants grace

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24 Jones, 15.
through judgment.” The perpetual chain of violence is the natural outcome of understanding human relations fundamentally in terms of a master-slave relationship. Freeing humanity from this mold of oppressor-oppressed relations, Jesus’ resurrection makes it “possible to be human without being trapped in a net of mutual destructiveness” (Resurrection, 88).

Williams makes it clear that here we are talking about “some unimaginable qualitative leap into reconciliation” (ibid., 13). As women who came on Easter morning looking for the corpse of a martyr found a void, “[i]f we come in search of the ‘God of our condition’ at Easter, we shall not find him” (ibid., 71). Salvation and conversion mean “rescue from the trap of the judge-victim relationship, the gift of a relationship which is not of this kind” (ibid., 6). It is a justice that “judges our justice.”

He [God] judges our justice: not condemning it or inverting it, but transcending. It is the secret that Paul learned, of a divine justice, righteousness, which acts only to restore – what Luther so strangely called the ‘passive righteousness’ of God, the justice that will not act against us, that is incapable of aggression or condemnation: the righteousness that makes righteous. (Ibid., 13)

If justice is understood as what inverts “the existing order to create new victims out of old oppressors,” we are still in “the repetitive logic whereby those who were oppressed tend to become oppressors once they gain power,” and our “imagination is still trapped in the illusion that the basic and ultimate form of human relation is that between the powerful and the powerless,” in other words, “a master-slave relationship” (Resurrection, 11).

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26 Jones, 126. The most powerful portrait of this is found in George Orwell’s Animal Farm.
Giving the example of a “chain of terrorist counter-violence as a result of the violence” between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs first originated by European Christian anti-semitism, Williams emphatically states, “any society that revenges itself on those who have offered it violence stands in the same rank” (ibid., 12). It is needless to say that the same applies to individuals. Yoder rejects “the modern mythical belief that righteous violence on the part of the oppressed is normally a means of liberation” (PJ, 186 n. 50). He agrees with Williams who argues that “the diminution of another is also the diminution of the self” (Resurrection, 14), that “my oppressive and condemnatory role in fact wounds and diminishes me” (ibid., 6, original emphasis), and that being a victim of violence does not entitle me to resort to violence. God’s justice does not reside in the reversal of roles in the oppressor-oppressed relations but in the breaking of the cycle of violence and vengeance, in the transcendence of the oppressive ‘master-slave’ relationship.

The vicious cycle of destructive force is halted and broken only when its “destructiveness is absorbed and not transmitted” (ibid., 9). Simone Weil connects ‘Fate’ in classical Greek tragedy to Jesus:

What is called Fate in Greek tragedy has been very badly misunderstood. There is no such agency apart from the conception of the curse, which, once produced by a crime, is handed down by men from one to another and cannot be destroyed except by the suffering of a pure victim obedient to God.27

God’s love for sinful humanity is shown in the “pure victim” and therefore shown as “opposition to violence” (Resurrection, 9). “Jesus, as a man perfectly obedient to the

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27 Simone Weil, Intimations of Christianity among the Ancient Greeks (RKP 1957), 60. Recited in Resurrection, 9.
Father, consistently refuses the role of oppressor: he does no violence, he utters no condemnation, he has no will to exclude or diminish” (ibid., 8). The New Testament records Jesus’ silent resignation. At his trial, in face of all the accusations and violence against him, Jesus never “uses counter-violence of a verbal or any other variety” (ibid., 7). His “resurrection … declares precisely our [the believers’] incapacity for apocalyptic destruction – and equally declares that the ‘divine prerogative’ of destruction is in any case a fantasy” (ibid., 17).

Jesus, “the truth incarnate,” comes into the human world, into this vortex of destructiveness and self-deceptions, which is deeply resistant to the truth, and therefore he comes as “a stranger, essentially and profoundly vulnerable,” whose presence in the world inevitably involves “rejection, crucifixion outside the city gates” (ibid., 35). It is nonviolent love of Jesus that takes him to the cross, because it throws the world so antithetical and rebellious to that love in disarray. As Earl Zimmerman suggests, Jesus’ cross is “the social consequence of representing God’s coming reign in an unwilling world,” the God whose moral character is “revealed in Jesus’ renunciation of domination, vulnerable enemy love, and ultimate self-sacrifice on the cross.”28 The truth incarnate has come into the world to release it from untruth.

Yet it has entered the world, it has allowed itself to be linked with the sphere of destructive untruth: and even if rejected, it cannot be annihilated. If Calvary shows the links between truth and untruth pulling the former down towards extinction, Easter shows us those same links, the same interconnectedness of the human world, reversed, so that truth draws untruth up towards the light. (Resurrection, 35-36, original emphasis)

His purpose of coming was not giving up when rejected and he went ahead and was raised to lift this world of destructive untruth up to the light. He was “not exhausted and consumed by the world’s mortal violence” (ibid., 109).

In Jesus, the shared human history of betrayal, violence and guilt is caught up and redeemed. In him, “the world characterized by betrayal is now interwoven with a reality incapable of betrayal” (ibid., 36). “To see the risen Jesus is … to ‘see’ the call towards the new humanity” (ibid., 109). Conversion is return to the ‘pure victim’ in hope and salvation is his gift of a relationship of a new kind, not judge-victim relationship.

When God receives and approves the condemned Jesus and returns him to his judges … he transcends the world of oppressor-oppressed relations to create a new humanity, capable of other kinds of relation – between human beings, and between humanity and the Father. There is more to human interrelation than the opposition of the one who possesses coercive force or authority to condemn and the one who suffers it. (Ibid., 9)

The relevance of this passage to Yoder’s reading of the Haustafeln is apparent. This qualitative leap of imagination of human relations, this transcendence of human interrelation from the master-slave relationship to that of “a new humanity,” is what Yoder reads in the New Testament household codes.

Resurrection is what makes “the process of renewing humanity in forgiveness” possible (ibid., 109). Williams explains a new creation:

God’s judgement operates in the gospel of the resurrection to bring men and women out of the slavery and deprivation of violence and mutual exclusion into a new creation, whose ‘law’ is Christ. The community of those in Christ … is a community whose concern, in living under Christ’s ‘law’, is to stand against oppression, exclusion and violence, to stand for the kind of human relation – and human-divine relation – which transcends the oppressor-oppressed bond. (Ibid., 21, original emphasis)
This new human relation is such as would not allow slavery or the subjugation of women. Williams regards these as “aspects of the theology and devotion of the Church in the past ages which are remote, empty, or even repellent” which the present Church has to remember “in penitence or puzzlement.” His declaration of their wrongness is definitive: “The Church was clearly blasphemously wrong for the greater part of two millennia on the subject of slavery; many would add that it has been no less wrong for even longer about the status of women” (ibid., 58).

The Church is “a new style of corporate human life” released “from the prison of mutual destructiveness” (ibid., 110). Its life is formed through “the ‘resurrection’ process of recovery and grace” (ibid., 32) in which one recovers “the non-violent, the non-oppressive self” – “the whole self” (ibid., 23) – that one “has rejected” (ibid., 16).

Through Jesus, the embodiment “of a love that opposes violence” (ibid., 99), the Church is given this deep and abiding sense of what relation is supposed to be, and thus this sense works as “a stimulus, an irritant, necessarily provoking protest at impoverished versions of social and personal relations” (ibid., 45). Prophecy that flows from a ‘believing’ community

is authentically a form of non-violent resistance: non-violent, because it does not aim simply to identify and locate blame so that it can condemn, exclude, and disparage; but resistance because it speaks of a drastic refusal of certain styles of individual and corporate life – a refusal which encompasses the whole of the prophet’s existence. (Ibid., 47)
Non-violent resistance is the stance of Christians who live the kingdom life while living in this world. We will be further aided on this kingdom ethic by Wannenwetsch’s account of the absent in the Heavenly City, before we seek to understand Yoder’s nonviolence.

(B) Presence of the Absence

Bernd Wannenwetsch’s study of Revelation 21 is based on his conviction that “a genuine theological engagement of politics should be precisely negative, representing what is absent rather than what is present” (Absent, 168 n. 5).29 Over against the alternative modes of theological understanding of the Heavenly City’s import for the earthly city – utopianism and fatalism – he opts for the mode of representing the absent. Utopianism, for example, focuses on representing the present: utopian or idealistic attempts to take up the positive features of John’s apocalyptic vision, such as the throne or the believers’ rule, and to grasp the consequence of that vision for the present. It even includes the approximation of New Jerusalem’s aesthetic splendor in the actual church buildings and sanctuaries. As an example of fatalism, Wannenwetsch uses the attitudes of the ape and of the master toward the Great City in Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Their differing attitudes nonetheless converge “in their fixation on the overwhelming presence of the Great City’s vice.” Rather than representing the absent, they show their concentration on “the presence of the negative,” therefore, ending up focusing on the present (ibid., 192).

29 Italics in quotations from his essay are original, unless otherwise indicated.
As a result, Wannenwetsch’s “negative political theology” is “a theology of the presence of the absence,” representing the absent (ibid., 172). His suggestion of two different ways of reading Hebrews 13:14, “Here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come,” shows at least a remote similarity to Reinhard Hütter’s explication of est and esse in his negative theology. First, listen to Wannenwetsch concerning the Hebrews passage:

By instinct, we tend to read this “forward,” from our own cities toward the future one: all that is good with ours will be even better then, and what is bad, frail, and fragmented will be made good, strong, and whole. But the saying can also be read backward: as we are looking for the city that is to come, we come to understand that the city we dwell in cannot last. (Ibid., 170)

The difference between the two ways lies in whether we are reading the passage “forward” – from the earthly city toward the Heavenly City – or “backward” – from the New City toward the city we dwell in.

Hütter puts forth the following as the thesis and its rationale of his essay, “Est and Esse: The Affirmative and the Negative in Theological Discourse”:

Negative theology, far from being an accidental, ultimately extrinsic, and even intrusively neo-platonic element of Christian theological discourse – and therefore allegedly foreign to the nature of the Christian Gospel and its Hebrew roots – must rather be understood as a necessary moment, albeit not the primary moment, of proper Christian theological discourse itself. The very necessity of negative theology as an intrinsic moment of theological discourse arises from the specific conceptual limitations entailed in any affirmative theology as the discourse of creatures. Without the corrective dynamic of negative theology, affirmative theology continuously stands in acute danger of succumbing to the subtle dynamic of conceptual idolatry.³⁰

He alerts against the danger of “the conceptual idol” of the affirmative theology, a theology of the *est* (concentrating on a creaturely activity or substance) which is “conceived of as sheer positivity.” The conceptual idol’s constitution *sub conditione creaturae* (under the condition of the creature) is constantly obscured in this positivity. Negative theology, a theology of the *esse* (concentrating on God’s agency and being) hedges against this problem through the idol’s deconstruction. Hence “the necessity of apophasis for cataphasis.”

However, Hütter emphasizes that “Christian theology’s negative moment must not be understood as canceling the affirmative.” Rather it works as the latter’s corrective moment. Maximus the Confessor’s memorable statement on the character negative theology assumes in Christian theological discourse, which he quotes, goes hand in hand with Wannenwetsch’s reading of Hebrews 13:14 “forward” or “backward”:

If you theologize in an affirmative or cataphatic manner, starting from positive statements about God, you make the Word flesh (cf. John 1:14), for you have no other means of knowing God as cause except from what is visible and tangible. If you theologize in a negative or apophatic manner, through stripping away of positive attributes, you make the Word spirit as being in the beginning God and with God (cf. John 1:1): starting from absolutely none of the things that can be known, you come in an admirable way to know Him who transcends unknowing.

Both theologians are referring to starting theological reasoning from the human tangible conditions on one hand or from the unknowable essence of God on the other hand. It also

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31 Ibid., 6.
32 Ibid., 5.
has to do with Hütter’s point that only in the order of knowing we can talk about
οἰκονομία’s antecedence to ἀπολογία34; but in the order of being “the reverse obtains.”35

Further, the distinction that Denys Turner posits between “negative propositions”
and “negating the propositional” points us back to the distinction made by Wannenwetsch
between focusing on “the presence of the negative” and on “the presence of the absence.”

Expositing Denys the Areopagite’s strategies in negative theology, Turner states:

For there is a very great difference between the strategy of negative propositions
and the strategy of negating the propositional; between that of the negative image
and that of the negation of imagery. The first of each of these pairs belongs to the
catataphatic in theology, and only the second is the strategy of the apophatic.36

By opting for representing the absent rather than representing the present, either through
utopian/idealistic or through fatalistic concentration on the present, Wannenwetsch’s
political theology clearly belongs to the category of negative theology.37 He notes “a
certain ‘apophaticism’ in the imagery employed in the book of Revelation” (Absent, 172),
and his understanding of the character of this absence in the Heavenly City is profound.

The absence that he reads in Revelation 21 is “absence as known to the saints –
present as awareness of its removal,” absence as “presented to the earthly city through the
witness of those who know themselves to be citizens of the New City while still living in
the old” (ibid.). Wannenwetsch’s understanding of two cities – the Heavenly City and the

34 Hütter explains οἰκονομία as “God’s creative and saving economy, which centers in Christ’s incarnation”
and ἀπολογία as something that “pertains to what can be said of God irrespective of the economy, usually
referring to the mystery of the triune God” in ibid., 2.
35 Ibid., 3 n. 8.
36 Denys Turner, The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism (Cambridge, UK/ New York:
37 It is more than coincidence that Wannenwetsch, Williams and Coakley all mention negative theology in
their exposition of theological visions. See pp. 259-60.
earthly city – follows Augustine’s: “The *civitas terrena*, which is determined by self-love, is poles apart from its heavenly counterpart, the *civitas caelestis*, which is governed by *agape*. The difference is qualitative, not quantitative; categorical, not relative” (ibid., 169 n. 9). Earthly cities portrayed as Babel/Rome are both analogues of and in opposition to the eschatological dwelling place. The demonic imperial power of Babel/Rome is based on violence and death, while the absence of death and crying and pain (Rev. 21:4) will mark the New City.

The way the two cities touch one another is reminiscent of Rowan Williams’ understanding of the risen Jesus as both *judge* and *hope* (*Resurrection*, 3).

What does it mean to say that the cities are touching one another? Rather than establishing a reassuring equilibrium and equidistance, this relation will be characterized by *judgment* and *hope*. In this age in which the Heavenly City lives as captive and stranger to the earthly, it can have no *stabilitas loci*. It “touches down” rather than “settles down.” It intersects rather than occupies. It cannot leave the earthly city unaffected. But the way in which it affects it is precisely as *judgment* and *hope* – not as a model, blueprint, or actual “betterment,” but neither as blunt annihilation nor disdain. (*Absent*, 170, my emphasis)

Without impoverishing the things to come or forsaking their newness, Revelation’s imagery of the New Jerusalem is what “brings not the annihilation of history but its consummation, not the abolition of the political but its transformation” (ibid., 172). In other words, the Future City touches its earthly counterpart as “both judgment and engagement” (ibid., 187). The following reflects a sound biblical view.

There is no promise of the new without judgment on the “old order of things” (Rev. 21:4 NIV). But in the vision of the New Testament, there is also no deconstruction of the old that does not itself bear the shape of hope and promise of the new. (Ibid., 171)
Wannenwetsch’s apophatic reading of Revelation 21 involves “de-citifying the city”: “the threefold need to defortify, demythologize, and desacralize the earthly city” (ibid., 168). This threefold process of de-citifying is necessitated by the three “traits that represent [the earthly city’s] most profound self-understanding – its civic pride” (ibid.) – and they are separatism, self-preservation, and civil religion (ibid., 172). Wannenwetsch points out the three core symbols of political rule that are presented in the Revelation text as characteristically absent in the Celestial City:

1. shut gates in the city wall (v. 25);
2. a need for lighting (sun and moon) to reflect the grandeur of the city (v. 23);
3. a temple at/as the center of the city (v. 22). (Ibid. 173)

First, shut gates in the earthly city’s wall stand for the separation of inside/outside and for the protection of insiders by violent means. The unity and peace of such a society are “guaranteed either by a rigorous … exclusiveness” which involves “vengeful expulsion of threatening elements” or “by warfare with people outside” (ibid., 175). On the contrary, the vision of the New City shows a wall whose doors are never shut. The wall enables the Heavenly City to be “recognizable as a locus, a defined and circumscribed space” (ibid., 176). But its doors that are perpetually kept open denote the city’s being a “structure and order without compulsion or hierarchy” (ibid., 177), in which the believers rule with God with no one being ruled – a vision of relationship similar to the one portrayed by Williams as a transcendence of the ruler-ruled relationship.

Second, Wannenwetsch sees sun and moon as standing for the lighting that the old city needs to illuminate the monuments and statues of its founders, thus related to the deification of the latter. The necessity of their deification presumes “original disorder”
and “primal discord” (ibid., 178) into which the founders are thought to have brought order and security. As opposed to this, the New City does not need sun or moon, because God’s shining glory fills and illuminates it from inside. It does not have to mythologize its founders for its security, because its security comes from “socially formative power of love” that it presumes rather than original disorder, not from an ontology of war but from an ontology of peace (ibid.). The glory of God does not eclipse any other light. It does not “render dark, meaningless, and void what was good and healthy in human civilization,” but consummates it under the throne of God and the Lamb (ibid., 179), just as Jesus has “no will to exclude or diminish” (Resurrection, 8) but his truth draws the world’s untruth up towards the light (ibid., 36).

Third, a temple that is at/as the center of the city corresponds to “the temple principle” in the earthly city: “the kind of dynamism that aims at the provision of protection and identity associated with organized and administered religion” (Absent, 181). Its absence in the Eschatological City is “the most astonishing absence” there, which represents the immediacy of divine communion, the city’s “most striking characteristic” (ibid., 180). This absence stands for “the eschatological supersession of the temple principle” (ibid., 181) and it envisions a political form of life that allows worship without religion, a “serving the throne” without the compartmentalizing and exclusion of human beings that goes hand in hand with the domestication of the divine for the sake of the sense of security without which humans find it so hard to exist. (Ibid., 182)

Instead of downgrading the church’s inevitable entanglement in “religion” on this side of the New City’s gates, Wannenwetsch sees the church’s “imprecision” as a healthy one
which it has on its journey toward a city without a temple with “the promise of ultimately seeing God’s face, which will make superfluous all the husks of religion” (ibid.).

He presents the church as “the hidden city within the city” living with “another citizenship” (ibid., 188), as “resident aliens” (ibid., 189), and it is “a hopeful hiddenness” (ibid., 182-83). Through its actual tasting of the real presence of its Lord at the Lamb’s table, it “makes present the absence of the three symbols of city-ness” (ibid., 188): shut gates, sun and moon, and temple. Despite its exposure to constant challenges in the city, the “church on pilgrimage to the New City” (ibid., 191) will nonetheless “try on” the life of the Heavenly City “that can do without inside-outside logic, mythical foundation, and (civil) religion” (ibid., 192). In Yoder’s view, this “trying on” presupposes the church’s self-understanding as a community of nonviolence. Loaded with these visions of the kingdom people’s ethic, we now turn to his understanding of nonviolence and his reading of the Haustafeln.

3. Yoder’s Nonviolence and the Haustafeln

(A) Yoder on Nonviolence

Among the various issues in Christian Ethics, the debate on the question of war has been an important one. James F. Childress defines “pacifists,” using Reinhold Niebuhr’s language, as those who “disavow war and/or participation in war in any form,” and then “just warriors” as those “who hold that war is justified under some
Although there are people who argue that “pacifists and just-war theorists actually share a common starting point: a moral presumption against the use of force,” the divergence of one from the other is significant. And we can find no better proponent for each position than in John Howard Yoder and Paul Ramsey respectively. Learning about Ramsey’s just war theory will benefit an effort to understand Yoder’s idea of pacifism.

According to James T. Johnson, the term just war tradition “refers broadly to a body of moral, legal, and political wisdom that has developed over the history of western culture on the justification of armed force and the limits of justified use of such force.” Ramsey traces the doctrine of justifiable war in the literature in defense of Christian participation in war, to Ambrose and Augustine, which was continued in its development throughout the Middle Ages and by Thomas Aquinas, and into the present day. Christian just war theory began to see its revival and redefinition in the 1960s, and Paul Ramsey is the central figure of that endeavor. Ramsey’s career has been filled with an effort to recover and explicate the idea of just war in Christian terms for almost four decades, from his earliest book, Basic Christian Ethics (1950) to his last, Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism (1988). His writings on this subject constitute one of the most important thematic and substantive contributions of his thought. The characteristics of

Ramsey’s conception of just war are its core idea of Christian love as an absolute moral norm and its priority on the *jus in bello* (the right conduct of war).

In *BCE*, Ramsey draws from the biblical story of the Good Samaritan in his effort on the moral obligations of Christians regarding the use of violent force. His argument here would become a major feature of his later, more developed thought: that “the Christian ethic of love for neighbor, with its strong presumption against use of force in self-defense, has quite different implications when another person than oneself is the object of unjust attack,”

> 42 when “non-resisting, unself-defensive love must determine its responsibility … toward more than one neighbor.”

While he finds an emphasis on non-resistance in Jesus’ “personal ethic,” in Jesus’ teaching and example he finds the beginning of a “preferential ethic of protection” for the neighbor.”

> 44 When the Christian himself is attacked, he may not defend himself by force, “lest in defending his life he should stain his love toward his neighbor.”

Yet when another person is being attacked unjustly, the Christian’s duty is to defend this neighbor, using force if necessary. “He who does not keep harm off a friend, if he can, is as much in fault as he who causes it.”

This model of reasoning provided by Ambrose became paradigmatic for Ramsey’s own just war thought.

Johnson finds the central place the moral norm of love has in Ramsey’s just war theory to be striking, even anomalous, when compared to the just war tradition as a whole.

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42 Johnson, 187.
44 Ibid., 169.
45 Ramsey (1961), 37.
46 Johnson, 187.
He continues that “Ramsey’s just war theory is highly unusual in its heavy reliance on an ethic of love.” And he finds the reasons in Ramsey’s dependence on Augustine and the influence of liberalism. He contends that Ramsey depended on Augustine in developing the theological foundation for his just war ethic. “The centrality of love on which Ramsey focused in Augustine’s theology provides the justification for Ramsey’s own focus on love as the central just war norm.” Johnson adds that when Ramsey was developing his just war theory, such dependence on an ethic of love was commonly found as a central feature of Protestant Christian theology and ethics:

Love as the basis of Christian ethics was the legacy of liberalism. And in this tradition Ramsey devoted the major part of his first book, Basic Christian Ethics, to spelling out the dimensions of an ethic of love.

Another anomaly is found in Ramsey’s exclusive focus on the *jus in bello*. Johnson explains that “just war tradition defines both a *jus ad bellum*, a set of criteria for judging the rightness or wrongness of a given decision to resort to force, and a *jus in bello*, which provides criteria for judging the rightness or wrongness of particular ways of using force.” He points to the imbalance between treatment of the *jus in bello* and the *jus ad bellum* in Ramsey’s just war thought. “Ramsey’s own just war thought focuses almost entirely on the *jus in bello* and stresses discrimination as morally prior to proportionality within *jus in bello* concerns.” Ramsey puts priority on the principle of discrimination and his overriding concern is noncombatant immunity. For him, Christian

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47 Ibid., 189.
48 Ibid., 190.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 184.
51 Ibid.
love permits moral obligation for Christians to engage in war, but it also sets limits on what a Christian might do, imposing a prohibition on direct, intentional killing of “any person not directly or closely co-operating in the force which should be resisted.”

Ramsey’s undue emphasis on the right conduct of war (jus in bello) over against questions of justice in the resort to war (jus ad bellum) constitutes another most striking feature of his just war thought. Childress also points out that, by contrast to the common starting point of both pacifists and just warriors that war is at least prima facie wrong and thus requires justification, the “Princeton School” represented by Paul Ramsey seems to hold “that just war theory is all about justice and that it recognizes no moral presumption at all against war.”

We may find the answer in this: “for Ramsey the jus ad bellum categories represent teleological judgment at work because in this fallen world there is no absolute justice or authority but only the relative presence of these political goods provided by the city of earth.” Johnson continues, “The presence of absolute justice and political authority, like the concept of the peace of the kingdom of Christ, is displaced to the end of history.” “Clearly in Ramsey’s thought,” he argues, “the primary ethical question for Christians is not whether to engage in violence, but how to act out of love toward the neighbor.”

So long as there is injustice in the world, on this view, there may arise some circumstances in which acting out of love for the neighbor implies using violent

52 Ramsey (1961), xx.
53 Childress, 217.
54 Johnson, 204.
55 Ibid., 188. Original emphasis.
force in the service of that neighbor; yet at the same time love also set limits on
the target of that force and its intensity. In just war terms, these two forms of
limits become the principles of discrimination and proportionality.\textsuperscript{56}

How can Ramsey escape the criticism such as Stanley Hauerwas’ and D. Stephen
Long’s in their foreword to \textit{BCE} that “Ramsey is thus put in the awkward position of
trying to make a utilitarian culture live in a discriminating fashion”\textsuperscript{57}? Or how will he
answer Paul Lehmann’s question “if Ramsey’s use of philosophical idealism had
transformed the Gospel rather than be transformed by it,”\textsuperscript{58} even though he contends,
“With whatever school the Christian makes common cause …, he must first learn not to
be used by it or to allow the fundamental Christian ethical perspective to suffer
alteration”\textsuperscript{59}? While Hauerwas and Long refer to it as “a mark of his courage”\textsuperscript{60} that he
never retreats from that effort to ask disinterested love of people, what would Yoder say?
Ramsey counters the interpretation that the changes made in and after the age of
Constantine (including the early development of just war ideas) represented a fall from
moral purity on the part of the church: “The change-over to just-war doctrine and practice
was not a ‘fall’ from the original purity of Christian ethics, … this was a change of tactics
only.”\textsuperscript{61}

Yoder contends that “there was not a ‘just war’ undercurrent in the first centuries.”
Rather, “there were new challenges to which the separatist ethic of the apocalypse or of
the pacifist fathers did not seem to speak sufficiently” (\textit{PK}, 75). Without a new prophetic

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., xxvii.
\textsuperscript{59} Paul Ramsey, “Introduction,” ibid., xxxiii.
\textsuperscript{60} Hauerwas and Long, ibid., xxii.
\textsuperscript{61} Ramsey (1961), xvii.
voice, Ambrose and Augustine “did buy into a system whose inherent dynamism they could no longer control”: “they got their new ideas about the just war” from Cicero, not from any “not yet recorded oral treasury of apostolic memories” (ibid., 76). For Yoder, “just war” is “a fundamentally new political ethic, not organically evolved from the social stance of the early Christians,” “a change … which must be described as a reversal rather than as an organic development,” “counter to the scriptures,” “a later introduction invalidated by its contradicting the ancient message,” “the traditions of men versus the commandment of God,” “a fundamental innovation,” and “side channels which eddy but lead nowhere” (ibid., 75-77).

Yoder further criticizes, “It has very seldom functioned as an efficacious restraint, as it was supposed to. It has more often been transmuted … into a simple affirmation that war is acceptable if it meets certain requirements. Augustine himself would reject that use made of his language” (ibid., 79). Johnson remarks that “despite the widespread conception of Augustine as the originator of Christian just war doctrine, his role in the development of the tradition was in fact much less fundamental.”^62 Yoder puts a fundamental critique on “prior acceptance of the irrelevance of Jesus to the political existence of his disciples, of the prior commitment to the imperative of using the world’s language if we want to challenge the world’s imperatives,” discarding “the simple language of the Gospel” (PK, 79). Rejecting the assumption that there is no basis for a

^62 Johnson, 190.
social ethic in the gospel, he contends that the problem is “that we choose to ignore it because of the radical demand it places on us.”

While pacifism is rarely taken seriously as a “coherent intellectual and social-ethical position,” Yoder has “formulated a pacifist position that provides a rationale and form for a Christian social ethic that actively engages the world.” His pacifism stems firmly from his Christology and an eschatological perspective is central to that idea. What obligates the Christian to nonresistance is “the person and work of Christ that finds its clearest expression in the cross, where God decisively dealt with evil, not by responding in kind, but through self-giving, nonresistant love.” Through Christ’s cross, God created a new social order of the suffering servanthood in which “God wills to rule [God’s] kingdom only through voluntary obedience.”

Yoder’s slogan is “Let the church be the church” (OR, 113). He criticizes that the church “has been giving her attention to being something other than the church. It is from this lack of her dedication to her major cause that she needs to be called to cease trying to do something else and to become herself” (ibid., 114). Here he is talking about church’s efforts to be the soul of the existing society since Constantine. Christians assumed that if they “did not take management responsibility for society, there was no

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64 Ibid., 29. Richard B. Miller says, “the pragmatic and ‘particularist’ character of pacifist thought often defies facile systematization” in Miller, 467.
66 Ibid., 30.
67 Ibid., 31.
one else who could do it and the world would fall apart” (ibid., 127). Church’s “establishment” is accused by Yoder of being what “helped let the church cease to be the church” (ibid., 129). Both are sentenced to be wrong: the identification of the church with a given society; and the idea that one given society could be somehow Christianized through the church’s possession of such authority in its midst. Yoder condemns the Western Christendom that it “has been most unfaithful in the past and stands today to gain most by saying yes to the shaking of her foundations” (ibid.).

Now he proclaims “the failure of the Constantinian vision to produce a reliably Christianized world” (ibid., 128). Through the breakdown of Christendom, Christians are again called to recognition of our “voluntary minority” (ibid.) position. This recognition means “our convinced acceptance of the fact that we cannot oblige the world to hold the faith which is the basis of our obedience,” and that we “therefore should not expect of the world that kind of moral performance which would appropriately be the fruit of our faith” (ibid., 122). The church’s business is first of all to be the church with “the visible distinctness” (RP, 56) and “particularity” (ibid., 110), and “the church’s strength is in her ‘otherness.’”\(^{69}\) The church precedes the world epistemologically and axiologically (PK, 11). The church must be a believing church, responding to the Christian “story” and making that story their own.

For Yoder, “it is inappropriate to filter and tailor the claims of the Christian calling through the estimation made for ‘Everyman’ … as to what may reasonably be

\(^{69}\) Hauerwas (1973), 32.
expected of ordinary people” (RP, 116). “Christian ethics is for Christians” (ibid.), not for everyone.

In order then to make the ethics that one calls “Christian” accessible to ordinary people, the condescension must follow that asks of moderately motivated people only a moderate level of devotion. (Ibid., 117)

Hauerwas succinctly puts it, “In short, for Yoder both the subject and the audience of Christian ethics are Christians – the people who are constituted by that polity called church.”

Thus Yoder emphatically rejects Christian responsibility for the establishment of any particular, Christian vision of what society ought to become. He cites Karl Barth’s distinction between “Christian community and civil community”: the community of Christians who “all confess Jesus as Christ and as Lord” (RP, 108) and the community whose members do not. Barth’s idea, that “the expression of Christian concern for the shape of the wider society must take into account the fact that the participants in that society are not addressable from a perspective of faith in Jesus Christ,” is highly praised by Yoder as a “profound structural innovation” (ibid.).

Jesus, according to Yoder, was politically relevant. “He was a threat because his gospel of love, peace, and justice made people less governable,” as opposed to the view of H. Richard Niebuhr who thinks that Jesus was rejected by his people because he ignored everything about material civilization, that is, culture. If Jesus’ own perfectionist

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ethic had not been politically relevant, he would hardly have posed a problem to those who had him crucified. And we have to notice that “Jesus’ relevance was not in trying to make history move in the right direction, but in providing powerful impetus among men for” refusal to its moving in the wrong direction.²²

Yoder simply “denied that Christians have been charged with making the world come out right. Instead, we are commissioned to obedience, faithfulness to the Master,” and “it is God not we who must bear final responsibility for the strategy of dealing with the world by the way of the cross rather than by the ways of violence and its power.”²³ He believes that sin cannot be destroyed by sin. Only God, using the faithfulness of loving people, can ultimately destroy sin. So he refuses the idea of using evil means to gain any end. “Because it is from the cross that [Christ] reigned, because it is ‘the Lamb that was slain that is worthy to receive power’” (OR, 126), “the cross and not the sword, suffering and not the brute power determines the meaning of history” (PJ, 232).

Yoder is right when he says about just war that “the problem is that within the same culture we take positions so fundamentally contradictory that we cannot both be faithfully serving the same Lord” (PK, 76). Regarding this, can Ramsey’s notion of essence of the kingdom of God, “disinterested love of neighbor,” cut off from its origin, have any power of transforming the earthly city, even though he maintained it steadfastly all through his life? As Hauerwas puts it, “Nonresistance is right, not because it works,

²² Ibid., 187-88.
but because it anticipates the triumph of the Lamb that was slain.”\textsuperscript{74} The strength of Yoder’s position is that his pacifism, his nonviolence “constitute the heart of our worship of a crucified messiah.”\textsuperscript{75}

(B) The *Haustafeln*

Throughout his essay, “Revolutionary Subordination,” Yoder rejects the idea of the early church borrowing ethical guidance on household relations from non-biblical sources of moral insight. While he takes the widely held view of borrowing from the Stoics to be an “alleged” one (*PJ*, 165 n. 6), Crouch and Balch among others have shown in Chapter 1 that the recurring pattern in the New Testament *Haustafeln* is from an existing, widely circulated topos in the Greco-Roman society. Starting from the unwritten laws (ἀγραφα νόμιμα) of the Greek popular ethic which left their imprint on the classical systems of Plato and Aristotle, to the Stoic list of duties (καθήκοντα) which continued its influence on the popular philosophy of the Roman empire, and to Hellenistic Jewish lists, the schema that is found in the *Haustafel* texts had long been in use before it was adopted by early Christians.

Luke Timothy Johnson and Wayne A. Meeks support this observation of the early church’s adoption of the moral teachings of the larger society. Johnson, for example, attests to “how pervasively Paul used the techniques and rhetorical topoi of Hellenistic

\textsuperscript{74} Hauerwas (1973), 30.
moral philosophers.”76 When he talks about 1 Peter elsewhere, he describes the tension that Christians must have experienced as “a group seeking to make a home for its new identity within a larger cultural context, rejecting but also accepting key elements of the dominant culture along the way.”77 Meeks also offers a more viable explanation than the picture that Yoder draws about the situation of the church in Paul’s time in terms of its relationship with the culture in which it was situated. Despite Yoder’s efforts – in his attempts to make his main point of the book that Jesus is relevant for social ethics – to say that the young church did not need “other sources of help” (PJ, 8), that “the borrowing of Stoic conceptions of ethics” were not “some of the elements of Paul’s adjustment” (ibid., 10), and that Christians did not get their ethics elsewhere (ibid., 97), we find that the mixture of and at the same time the distinction between the two cultures, Christian and the larger society’s, were more of a concurrent happening within the church.

Meeks’ historical study of the life of first Christians and the social world of the apostle Paul gives us a more balanced view of what it was like: “Not surprisingly, since no sect can isolate itself completely from the larger culture, customs of the macrosociety also have some weight with Paul.”78 He goes on to talk about this natural mingling/tension with the surrounding culture in regards to the church’s teaching on the household relations.

The kinds of behavior recommended are thus joined with a set of sacred symbols and a historical ethos unique to the Christians. Yet we have seen that Paul and his co-workers also take for granted many norms that are shared by the sect with

76 Johnson (2001), 92.
77 Johnson (1999), 483.
78 Meeks (2003), 125.
society at large. That is hardly surprising. When such norms are expressed, they are often in forms that were especially common in the Greek-speaking Jewish communities of the Mediterranean cities, but often they have parallels also in works of the contemporary pagan philosophers and sophists. The Christians might be resident aliens in the world, their politeuma in heaven (Phil. 3:20), but they were neither withdrawing from the world (1 Cor. 5:10) nor completely denying its realities and values.79

This observation of Meeks’ actually goes hand in hand with Yoder’s own on the way the surrounding society’s order and the Christian order exist: that “the old and the new order exist concurrently on different levels” (PJ, 186).

Meeks continues that the Christian group saw “itself, as a whole, distinct from ‘the world’ even though … the actual boundary between the two was more ambiguous than” any “simple statement would suggest.”80 The Pauline groups experienced some tension between a new Christian “mode of socialization, which opposes the normal structures of the macrosociety, and the old structures.” He observes that the old, normal structures of the larger society are

not completely escapable, for the Christians continue to live in the city and to interact with its institutions, and besides, they still carry some of its structures in their minds and in the houses where they meet. Thus in the paraenesis of the later letters of the Pauline school, Colossians and Ephesians, reminders of the new ‘antiworldly’ relations introduced in baptism stand alongside admonitions for proper behavior in hierarchically structured roles: husbands/wives, fathers/children, masters/slaves.81

It is exactly the way Christians today live out their faith: as Johnson points out, “the noblest Christian ideals … must always be negotiated within the hard and resistant

79 Ibid., 136.
80 Ibid., 157.
81 Ibid.
circumstances of cultural contexts in which the power and privilege – as well as the complex and ambiguous embodiments – of difference are always present.”\textsuperscript{82}

Eduard Lohse does not find in the Colossian household code “timelessly valid laws” nor any “particular social order with ageless dignity.” The general estimation of what is fitting and proper changes as times change, but Christian admonition to new generations will constantly be “to be obedient to the Kyrios.” It is important to note the fact that “How this obedience is to be expressed concretely at any given time, will always have to be tested and determined anew.”\textsuperscript{83} Meeks offers an observation about how long the household management topos persisted “in the standard repertoire of moralizing teachers and orators in antiquity” and how it “summed up a bit of the practical wisdom of the age.”\textsuperscript{84} The following quotation is helpful for us to understand the topos in its own social context. Meeks continues,

The duties prescribed for children and parents, wives and husbands, slaves and masters were not ad hoc rules but the necessary corollaries of the structured nature of things. The universal ‘city of the gods and men’ (as the Old Stoics called it) was so constructed that some must lead and others follow, some must govern and others obey. Equity obtains when reciprocal exchange at all levels yields to each party that measure of value or honor that is proportional to the status to which Providence has assigned each one.\textsuperscript{85}

This picture agrees with what we have observed in Aristotle’s and other philosophers’ writings in antiquity in Chapter 1. Thus we gather from this, as Meeks pointed out earlier, that the boundary between the wider culture and the Christians’,

\textsuperscript{82} Johnson (2001), 211.
\textsuperscript{83} Lohse, \textit{Colossians and Philemon}, 157.
\textsuperscript{84} Meeks (1996), 242-43.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 243. Original emphasis.
between the old order and the new, was of an ambiguous and complicated kind.

Therefore, the concept of “borrowing” is not as clear-cut as Yoder seems to argue it is.

Meeks’ following point especially makes sense in this regard.

When some Christian writers of the first two centuries cast their admonitions in this familiar pattern, then, they were not ‘borrowing’ a page from this or that philosophical school. They were thinking with the moral tools their culture had given them. … As the household was the matrix within which the early Christian congregation began its life and took its shape, so the congregation’s leaders must concern themselves with a household’s good order. 86

Each interpreter’s own cultural understanding plays a significant role in finding aspects of the scriptural teachings more or less acceptable, in being more or less ready to meet their challenge.

As shown above in Chapter 1 Section 1 (B), the Colossian Haustafel (3:18-4:1) is placed in the subsection of 3:1-4:6 as the application of the life of the new age as Christians to the daily life in the household. Paul applies “the best available philosophical teaching” in “the societal framework of the Hellenistic world, which had as its basic unit the extended patriarchal household,” 87 whether in apologetic or in missional/tactical purpose, but with a distinct emphasis on reciprocity and a clear Christian motivation to “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (3:17). We read Colossians with “both loyal and critical engagement”: with loyalty because it is “part of the canon of Scripture that has nourished many generations in the

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86 Ibid.
87 Johnson (1999), 400-401.
faith,” and with critical inquiry because, like all of Paul’s other letters, Colossians has elements that appear “to compromise the good news in favor of cultural conventions.”

Before we move on to the clear statement of the good news in the household code in Colossians, it would be appropriate to acknowledge certain limits to Paul’s egalitarianism. Not only in disputed letters, as seen in 1 Tim. 2:11-15 in which Paul holds women to be responsible for the fall as descendants of Eve and thus to be saved through childbearing, but also in undisputed letters, we find his limited understanding about women’s equal authority in speech and behaviors: for example, his teachings on women’s head coverings in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 and on women’s silence in the churches in 1 Cor. 14:33-36. The relevance of Johnson’s point on 1 Tim. 5:3-16 which deals with the community welfare system for widows reaches beyond its immediate context to cover Paul’s overall attitude toward women. He acknowledges that we do not have the record by women themselves about their perception in those situations, and he adds,

Paul’s perceptions by no means can be taken as neutral reportage in such cases. It is certainly possible that during Paul’s lifetime he should be irritated or worried, in Ephesus as he was in Corinth, with expressions of freedom among women that pushed past the cultural norms he finds comfortable, especially when such expressions are found among women with sufficient wealth and relative independence to be free of the harsher domestic restraints imposed on the poor by economic deprivation. And it is plausible that here, as in 1 Corinthians, Paul defends male prerogatives and perspectives out of patriarchal reflex.

It is true that Paul has firm belief in the fundamental equality of women in terms of membership and identity in Christ (Gal. 3:28), appreciates their service working in the

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88 Johnson (2001), 98-99. Even though his statement here is about 1 and 2 Timothy, I see its relevance to Colossians, too.
89 This logic is comparable to the teaching that “the faithful slave is rewarded in heaven” in return to his/her “all-but-absolute obedience to the master or mistress,” as Meeks says in Meeks (1996), 241.
90 Johnson (2001), 206.
field with him, as in the cases of Phoebe (Rom. 16:1), Prisca (1 Cor. 16:9; Rom. 16:3), and Junia (Rom. 16:7), and recognizes the power of the Spirit also at work in women. But it is also true that he grows nervous when the gifts of the Lord in the assembly challenge “the culturally defined gender roles of the oikos.” Johnson thus sees Paul “use (with slight modifications) the patriarchal tables of household ethics for relations between the genders within the oikos” in Col. 3.18-19. He maintains, “It is not particularly shocking to find such limits to Paul’s egalitarianism, given his own cultural conservatism (Rom. 13:1-7) and that of his overall social context, wherein the submission of women to men was the basic cultural assumption.”

As Johnson says concerning 1 Tim. 2:8-15, which is again applicable to the Haustafeln, patterns of abuse against women and harms done to them within the church and within society as a whole based on these passages “need to be acknowledged candidly and … emphatically disavowed.” As Meeks asks, how can we “avoid making equally disastrous mistake” as was made in the Civil War around the slavery issue, “if we claim the Bible as norm in the ethical issues we face today”? What are the conclusions of the aforementioned scholars who have struggled with this question? Mark A. Noll detects the heart of the problem of the American Civil War as “a first-order theological crisis” in the synthesis of Christianity, republicanism, common sense morality, the Enlightenment, and American covenantal exceptionalism, which left capricious, arbitrary

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91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 207.
93 Ibid., 208.
94 Meeks (1996), 245.
95 Noll, 162.
interpretations of the Bible unchecked in the social climate which lacked any higher authority. Referring to Southern evangelicals whose mind was not changed even by the loss of war “that the Bible sets whites over blacks and endorses and legitimates slavery,” Kevin Giles remarks, “Sadly, it must be admitted that the Scriptures interpreted through the eyes of self-interest led them astray.”  

Still feeling at a loss in face of what Noll calls “American interpretive chaos” and “interpretative dilemmas,” nonetheless these scholars offer one common suggestion for the solution: listening to the weak. Admitting that “There are no magical rules of historical method or of hermeneutics that will assure that a scripture-based moral judgment will be right and just,” Meeks suggests creating “practices and occasions that will nurture ‘the daily habit of direct fellow feeling’ so as to shape a moral intuition appropriate to the gospel,” one basic element of which “would surely be the habit of listening to the weaker partner in every relationship of power.” This view agrees with Edward Schillebeeckx’ conclusion in his essay on Christian obedience, in which “the weaker partner” happens to be the “fellow-men” in non-Western parts of the world:

Finally, Christian obedience is above all listening and watching out for the kairos, the opportune moment and especially listening obediently to the cry of two-thirds of the world’s population for liberation and redemption and then acting in a concrete way in accordance with the voice of God. This is one fundamental form of Christian obedience and one that is derived from the authority of suffering man.

96 Giles (2002), 230.
97 Noll, 162.
It has everything to do with one of the five practices that define Christians’ body politics for Yoder, “The Rule of Paul,” which delineates that “everyone who has something to say … can have the floor,” regardless of his/her social or economic standing (BP, 61). To him, this is democracy.

The suggestion of developing the habit of listening to the weak for wholesome interpretation of the Bible is further advanced by Meeks in his essay on Paul’s eschatologically-aimed polyphony. Based on 1 Cor. 8-10, his argument is that Paul employed a polyphonic style – intentionally presenting a case in multiple voices – “because the kind of ethic demanded by the action of God in the crucified and risen Messiah is one in which all these voices get a hearing.”100 This ethic is open to both the old and the new voices.

The polyphonic ethic undertakes … to make sure that the community continues to hear and heed the norms and stories voiced in the past and at the same time engages in the transformative, interpretive work that is required to discern also what may be valid in the new voices from outside and from the future.101

This observation of Meeks’ finds its echo in Phyllis A. Bird. She underscores the Bible’s “pluriform and multivocal character”:

A collection of writings of different genres, ages, subject matter, and theologies, the Bible spans more than a millennium of time in its own internal witness and represents hundreds of voices. It presents us with the conversation of a community over time, a conversation about the source and meaning of its life, its destiny, and its vocation. It is a conversation that adopts new language for new occasions, a conversation that is filled with conflict and passionate argument as

101 Ibid., 29.
different voices present their visions and their claims to truth. It requires us to enter into that conversation and to test those claims.\textsuperscript{102}

Just as the Bible is “a written document” that presents the truth about God and humanity in its pluriform, multivocal way, Christians’ efforts to understand its meaning in their lives in today’s world also are supposed to constitute the continued critical testing and conversation.

And she is not the only one who sees the feminist movement as one way that the Spirit “manages to escape” “a straitjacket” of the attempts of most doctrines of authority to assure that “there is one right way of using or understanding the Bible.”\textsuperscript{103} Rowan Williams regards “societies losing or suppressing their past” as “unfree, diseased, or corrupt,” and counts all national liberation movements and women’s studies to be important efforts of “a recovery of the past”: “We can point to the proliferation of feminist studies of women’s role in history or literature as illustrating the same process of ‘recovery’” (\textit{Resurrection}, 24-25). Johnson also recognizes the contribution that women’s movement has made to the growth in understanding. He says,

I agree that our growth in understanding of the human person, partly guided by the Holy Spirit, and partly driven by the resistance of brave women to these structures, makes it impossible to regard the statements disqualifying women from public speech and roles of leadership as either true or normative.\textsuperscript{104}

One of Yoder’s favorite dictums is John Robinson’s: “The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy Word” (\textit{Use}, 120; \textit{BP}, 59). Yoder sees the biblical appeal that the contemporary theologies of liberation have made as one of the

\textsuperscript{102} Bird (1994), 85.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 84-85.
\textsuperscript{104} Johnson (2001), 208-209.
occasions that fulfilled this promise. He understands that “the alliance of official
Christianity with oppression” had kept the deeper meaning of salvation from being seen
for a millennium. Then he adds an important observation in regard to the project that we
have been working on:

    One must assume as possible, and I would hope as likely, that there could be yet
other such further clarification ahead of us. Thus the function of the Bible is to
continue correctively to stand in judgment on our past failures to get the whole
point. (Use, 120)

Yoder’s notion of theologies of liberation might already include the feminist theology,
but, if not, it is arguable that the insights that the feminist theologians provide for the
whole theological reflections might be one of “such further clarification[s] ahead of us.”
It is hard to refute the importance of having the voices of women be heard, of letting
them tell their own stories, in enhancing our understanding of proper relationships among
men and women.

    However, heeding their arguments should involve critical engagement as with any
arguments. As shown above in Chapter 3, part of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s studies
on the Haustafeln is found problematic in terms of her understanding of the canon, her
treatment of tradition, and an exceeding loyalty to democracy. The problem can be
summed up as that of assuming the role of the sovereign judge. Williams admits that “the
Church was clearly blasphemously wrong for the greater part of two millennia on the
subject of slavery” and that of women’s status. He professes that “to live as a believer is
… incompatible with a life-form that takes slavery (or female subjugation) for granted.”
The eyes that find these past views to be wrong should be able to see that any individual
opinions or perspectives, including those of feminists, should not have sovereign
authority in biblical interpretation. He argues that the present Church inherits the past
with its “remote, empty, or even repellent” aspects and that it must remember this past,
“even if in penitence or puzzlement,” together with the following acknowledgement:

> We, and our opinions and perspectives, do not dictate what the Church is now and
certainly not what it has been; and the experience of this loss of control is itself salutary. We are not the hub, the spring of significance, the norm of interpretation in the Church, and neither is any other one segment of the Body. (Resurrection, 58)

Meeks advances the same point when he says, “God’s judgments are too unsearchable
(Rom. 11:33) for any single voice to presume to pronounce them.”105

Johnson also warns of censorship by certain hermeneutics that assumes “that the
church should hear from Scripture only those texts that confirm contemporary
perceptions and practices,” and maintains that “Only if texts that have scandalous and
even harmful possibilities are confronted and engaged by public discourse within the
assembly can their harmful potential be exorcised and their remaining positive features be
safely considered.” He then offers a sound reminder: “Such engagement, however, will
also recognize that contemporary assumptions concerning family structures and power
relationships are not themselves absolute, but are relative and culturally conditioned in a
way not unlike Paul’s own assumptions.”106 It is the same kind of warning that Yoder
places against “modern judges of New Testament ethics” or against the “egocentric
modernity of the contemporary reader” (PJ, 174 n. 27), when he asks,

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How can there be any corrective or challenge to our self-sufficiency, any continuity in the Christian community – to say nothing of any judging and redeeming Word of God – if the present insight of the bearer is to be sovereign judge of any communication one will accept? (Ibid., 175 n. 28)

Then, how should we read the *Haustafeln* in order to acknowledge the “continuity in the Christian community” and the “judging and redeeming Word of God”? I follow Yoder in suggesting that the codes should be read as injunctions on relationships among Christians defined by Jesus’ nonviolence. In Chapter 2 Section 2, I pointed out the problems that Yoder’s essay, “Revolutionary Subordination,” has: that he does not clearly name patriarchy as evil; that in the “double movement” he finds in the *Haustafeln*, he does not stress the significance of the first movement strong enough; and that his reliance on Schroeder is too heavy – partly due to the latter’s usefulness in advancing his thesis of the book – that he ignores and rejects the natural process of the early church’s use of the wider society’s cultural norms. What transpires after considering all these obstacles and the scandalous and harmful, culturally-conditioned elements of the *Haustafeln*, is a kingdom ethic, “a Messianic ethic” (ibid., 1) among Christians.

Far from being “a simple ratification of the stratified society into which the gospel has come” (ibid., 186), or showing the church’s “essentially conservative” position that “chose not to challenge the subjugation of woman or the institution of slavery” (ibid., 166; see also ibid., 10), as the criticism goes, the ethic that is expressed in the household codes is the specific manifestations within the household of “the new self” (Col. 3:10) that Colossians are encouraged to clothe themselves with, that is characterized by “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (Col. 3:12). N. T. Wright
comments on the Colossians *Haustafel* that “It is, in fact, extremely unlikely that Paul, having warned the young Christians against conforming their lives to the present world [in 3:5-14], would now require just that of them after all.”

The vision of the renewal is that “there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!” (Col. 3:11), which is the noblest Christian ideal also expressed in Gal. 3:28. The enumerated characteristics of believers are derived from the Lord’s suffering servanthood which is the model for their lives.

Yoder argues that revolutionary subordination is an expression of “the central theme of Christology: that Jesus’ suffering is the law of his disciples’ life” (*PJ*, 175 n. 30).

In an earlier essay of the book, “Disciple of Christ and the Way of Jesus,” Yoder lists subordination as one of “distinct themes of apostolic ethics” (ibid., 112-13) that are modeled after the life of Christ and are embodied in the disciple’s. He distinguishes subordination from subjection or submission.

The term *hypotassesthai* is not best rendered by *subjection*, which carries a connotation of being thrown down and run over, nor by *submission*, with its connotation of passivity. Subordination means the acceptance of an *order*, as it exists, but with the new meaning given to it by the fact that one’s acceptance of it is willing and meaningfully motivated. (Ibid., 172, original emphasis)

Thus subordination already has in it both the acceptance and resistance of the present order. In fact, Yoder argues, “‘subordination’ is itself the Christian form of rebellion. It is the way we share in God’s patience with a system we basically reject” (ibid., 200 n. 10).

It is closely related to Johannes Hamel’s view:

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107 Wright, 147.
If then hypotassethai (and the other substantially synonymous terms) is in principle a posture “befitting” the gospel of the self-abasing Lord of the world, then it is in every situation a free, extremely aggressive way of acting, taking very clear account of the situation, including feeling and understanding and will, always including the possibility of a spirit-driven resistance, of an appropriate disavowal and a refusal, ready to accept suffering at this or that particular point. (Ibid., 180 n. 40) ¹⁰⁸

These views are supported by Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, who maintain that “Humility and subordination should consequently be understood as a form of active world responsibility – on the basis that ‘humility’ also characterizes the Messiah, who is king over ‘all things.’” ¹⁰⁹ They continue to say,

In Col, we are clearly dealing not with the idea that the Christian community sanctioned any extra-Christian behavioral patterns, but rather, on the basis of accusation which were raised against the Christian community, the attitude and practice of subordination were emphasized as the essentially correct behavior of those people who have “put on the new human being (the new self),” who are “in the Lord.” ¹¹⁰

This stance is given by the Christian proclamation “that in Jesus’ messianity a new age had begun in which men and women alike are freed for obedience by the resurrection of the Crucified” (PJ, 176); and “that the church is under orders to make known to the Powers, as no other proclaimer can do, the fulfillment of the mysterious purposes of God” through Jesus “in whom their rebellion has been broken and the pretensions they had raised have been demolished” (ibid., 156). Jesus’ cross is “a victory, the confirmation that he was free from the rebellious pretensions of the creaturely condition” (ibid., 145).

Christians’ subordination to their partners – between husbands and wives, between

¹⁰⁸ Quoted by Yoder from Johannes Hamel, “Erwägungen zur urchristlichen Paraeneese …,” in Ernst Wolf (ed.), Christusbekenntnis im Atomzeitalter? ThEx, 70 (1959), 160-61.
¹⁰⁹ Barth and Blanke, Colossians, 436 n. 13.
¹¹⁰ Ibid., 436-37.
parents and children, between masters and slaves – therefore, constitutes “conscientious participation” in and “conscientious objection” to the existing social order, “a challenge to the Powers” (ibid., 157).

The reason that the wives and slaves who became Christians posed a threat to the society is not so much because they demanded liberty and emancipation, but because exactly in their submission they gave priority to God. While talking about the relations of mutual subordination in the household in Colossians, Johnson underlines the prior allegiance to God found in Paul’s exhortations.

By placing all these relations “in the Lord,” he demands of all an allegiance and obedience first and foremost to God. Any submission that would oppose or distort the more fundamental obedience owed to God must be resisted. The phrase “in the Lord,” therefore, places this social structure itself, as well as all social structures, under the critical judgment of the gospel.111

Based on Col. 3:11 among other verses, Barth and Blanke observe that “especially for Col, we are ultimately dealing with subjection to the Messiah.”112 As seen in Yoder’s “first movement,” Christians were accused of endangering the social and political order by assigning “to women, children, and slaves their autonomous and independent religious decision-making power, separately from their husbands, parents, and masters.”113

Yoder identifies the link of a common clear logic that ties the ethical instructions of the New Testament writers together:

The liberation of the Christian from “the way things are,” which has been brought about by the gospel of Christ, who freely took upon himself the bondages of history in our place, is so thorough and novel as to make evident to the believer

111 Johnson (1999), 401.
112 Barth and Blanke, 434.
113 Ibid., 435.
that the givenness of our subjection to the enslaving or alienating powers of this world is broken. (*PJ*, 185)

By confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, the confessor makes a statement not only about him/herself but about the world. “The Christian can transform human relationship through voluntary subordination not because (à la Troeltsch or Dibelius) Jesus did not change the world, but because he did” (ibid. n. 48). In his presidential address at the twenty-ninth annual meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics in 1988 entitled “To Serve Our God and to Rule the World,” Yoder delineates “human practices of doxological celebration” as “to persevere in celebrating the Lamb’s lordship and in building the community shaped by that celebration,” in other words, to go on living nonviolently (*Serve*, 5).¹¹⁴ For it is the way of living opened up by the “slaughtered Lamb.”

He was crucified because although his very presence threatened the bearers of power, he waged his holy war nonviolently. He was crucified because as herald of the messianic age he articulated the fulfilling of the law in such a way that love of neighbor is transmuted into love of enemy. The image of a slaughtered Lamb is no empty cipher; it is the code reference, utterly transparent … to the simple narrative substance of the work and the words … of that particular Palestinian populist, in all of his Jewishness and all of his patience. (Ibid., 7)

As Earl Zimmerman points out, Yoder sees Jesus “as a real threat to the political powers in first-century Palestine.”¹¹⁵ The new order of nonviolent love that Jesus inaugurated was a threat to the rebellious world.

Both Jewish and Roman authorities were defending themselves against a real threat. That the threat was not one of *armed*, violent revolt, and that it nonetheless bothered them to the point of their resorting to irregular procedures to counter it,

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¹¹⁵ Zimmerman, 124.
is a proof of the political relevance of nonviolent tactics, not a proof that Pilate and Caiaphas were exceptionally dull or dishonorable men. (*PJ*, 49, original emphasis)

“Jesus was … the bearer of a new possibility of human, social, and therefore political relationships” (ibid., 52). And, therefore, if we take them seriously, “Jesus’ message involves real social and political choices that are revolutionary in nature.” To Yoder, the *Haustafeln* represent one such specific case within the bounds of the household, a case of celebrating the Lamb’s lordship doxologically.

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116 Ibid.
Conclusion

The household codes in the New Testament “were so central to the American ideology of a slave-based society,”¹ and in recent decades have drawn intensive historical research. The codes have presented themselves hard to accept for modern readers, especially because they were typically used to ratify the institution of slavery by proslavery advocates during the American Civil War. The similar implications they apparently have for women’s status have made them the subject of criticism and rejection on the part of women’s studies. Most scholars dealing with the issue have experienced a deadlock due to “repeated uncertainties about the interpretation of Scripture” as Noll pointed out.² While clearly acknowledging this difficulty, this paper has sought to explore a faithful reading of the codes based on John Howard Yoder’s study on that subject, assisted by its historical studies in biblical scholarship and also in the field of Christian ethics. After tackling some of the problems that Yoder’s study has, it concludes its exploration with his understanding that the *Haustafeln*’s vision is “revolutionary subordination,” which is the ethic of the people on earth whose primary allegiance is with the kingdom of God, especially rooted in Christian nonviolence as a stance following the servanthood of Christ.

Brian Brock observes that “The *Haustafeln* are not difficult because the text is degraded or unintelligible – just the opposite: they are difficult because they clash with

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¹ Meeks (1996), 242.
² Noll, 162.
deeply held contemporary moral presuppositions” (Singing, 49).³ In face of the “problem of estrangement from Scripture in Christian ethics,” he argues that “the Bible is morally normative for the contemporary church” (ibid., ix, xix, original emphasis). In his discussion of Yoder and the Haustafeln, he stresses the importance of engaging the “hard” texts rather than dismissing them as irrelevant to contemporary lives.

Yoder suggests that exegetical maturity in Christian ethics consists in engaging one’s efforts to examine claims that a text is morally hard, or that swaths of the Bible are morally irrelevant. For Yoder, the point of going to Scripture is to let it burrow into and confront our moral presuppositions. This means that the interesting exegetical work is not summarizing Scripture but becoming aware when Scripture threatens our moral presuppositions. (Ibid., 49)

This maturity starts with an acknowledgement that “our hermeneutical presuppositions may in themselves be unethical” with “trained deafness and moral debilitation” (ibid., 3, x), which reflects an attitude which is opposite to that of modern readers who assume the role of the judge, who are like “self-insulated travelers who, despite being physically present in foreign lands, are impoverished by reading everything through the categories and perceptions of their home culture” (ibid., xii).

Brock states that for Yoder, ethical interpretation is complete only when “we risk it as action” (ibid., 50). This observation is shared with Zimmerman who says that “interpretation and application comprise one unified process” for Yoder.⁴ This view of Yoder’s goes well with Meeks’ who earlier maintained that creating “practices and occasions that will nurture ‘the daily habit of direct fellow feeling’” is an important job of

³ Brian Brock, Singing the Ethos of God: On the Place of Christian Ethics in Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 49. Further quotations from this book will be noted as (Singing, 49).

⁴ Zimmerman, 212.
Christian moral formation in shaping “a moral intuition appropriate to the gospel.”^5

Hence Yoder’s emphasis on “a perseverance in taking our ethical questions to the content of Scripture.” Brock’s understanding of Yoder on subordination is insightful.

When our moral sensibilities clash with the apparent meaning of passages of Scripture, rather than discarding them, we need to continue reading them until we think we can understand and live even Scripture’s difficult passages, a process that we cannot complete before the eschaton. We may never finally know what “subordination” means in marriage, but Yoder is most suggestive in hinting that the key is not to have a final moral answer but to find a plausible way to begin exploring in life the moral challenge Scripture presents. *(Singing, 50-51)*

Just as Yoder sees that the point of the Christian life on earth is in persevering “in celebrating the Lamb’s lordship and in building the community shaped by that celebration” *(Serve, 5)*, Brock contends that “exegesis should find its proper form only as praise of a God who is present with creatures,” which he finds is practiced by both Augustine and Luther, rather than as methodological detachment, because “reading as praise” is “more critical than critical theory” *(Singing, xv, xvii)*. This view stems from his conviction that “biblical interpretation in Christian ethics is in the service of God’s praise, to which it calls the world” *(ibid., xviii)*. His attempt to move beyond the question how to “bridge the varying degrees of estrangement between biblical studies and Christian ethics,” therefore, starts with the acknowledgement that the Bible is “strange and eternally different from our common sense as is Christ himself” *(ibid., xi)*. Praising God, best shown in Psalms, has a critical function:

The Psalms overturn the claim that our lives are what we make them by teaching us that the activities of life are meant for returning to God as praise. It is the

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^5 Meeks (1996), 252.
Psalms’ own rhythms and grammar of praise that supply the church with the resources necessary to make it aware of its captivity. (Ibid., xvii)

“Scripture is a unique invitation to praise,” and through singing “we enter the world of praise in which all human life is comprehended within God’s work – and is thus renewed.” Having their eyes opened to the presence and power of God’s kingdom, “singers are made ‘strangers and aliens’ in a rebellious world.” As mentioned before, “Scripture is foreign with Christ’s foreignness” and “[i]ts foreignness finds its origin in God’s inexhaustible holiness,” which because it is outside us consoles and teaches us (ibid., xvi-xvii). As Hütter has argued, negative theology constitutes a necessary moment in proper theological discourse. Starting with apophaticism which tells us that God is beyond our comprehension keeps us from the cataphatic trap we are in that allures us to start from ourselves and to end with the same in our theological reasoning. Biblical interpretation as praise and doxology begins with recognition of the clear gap between God and humanity, as Brock writes:

Such a beginning expresses the theological presupposition that no exegetical or devotional method can overcome God’s proper otherness. In the final analysis, it is not our historical or moral distance from the Bible that renders it foreign to us, nor the gap between time and eternity, but the gap between the ways of God and those of humanity. (Ibid., xv)

Williams shares this idea saying that “A theology of the risen Jesus will always be, to a greater or lesser degree, a negative theology, obliged to confess its conceptual and imaginative poverty – as is any theology which takes seriously the truth that God is not a determinate object in the world.”6 Meeks also says, “God’s judgments are too

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6 Williams, 84.
“unsearchable,” as Rom. 11:33 reads, “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”

In her discussion of politics and gender, Sarah Coakley looks at “how spiritual practice generates an apophaticism that (creatively) affects both doctrinal utterance and gender stability” (Powers, xix). In her book, Powers and Submissions, she deals with “the paradox of power and vulnerability” and argues that “the profound paradox of an inalienable surrender (‘submission’) to God” … “must remain the secret ground of” empowerment, even feminist empowerment (ibid., x).

In Yoder’s quotation, Johannes Hamel takes the Christian imperative, “Be subordinate,” to be founded “in the person and the way of the Lord, who is at the same time the norm and the realization of this self-abasement,” and he finds its best example in Phil. 2.

The best-known example, the christological Psalm of Phil. 2:5ff, grounds the imperative to the church to “regard one another as higher than oneself” by pointing to the self-abasement of the Lord of our salvation. The concrete definition of the meaning of hypotassesthai comes from the crucified and risen Lord who, being free, abased himself for our sake and gave himself for us. Since we receive our life from this deed of this Lord, it is fitting that we subordinate ourselves to one another in a way that corresponds to this gift and this example. The form of love among us is defined by that love which was shown toward us by the Lord who served us and rescued us. (PJ, 180 n. 40)

Yoder’s doxological celebration of the Lamb’s lordship, Brock’s reading of the Bible as praise, find their profound counterpart in Coakley’s study of power and submission through the concept of divine kenōsis in the first essay of her book, “Kenōsis and

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8 Coakley, xix. Further quotations from the book will be noted as (Powers, xix). Italicized words show original emphasis unless noted otherwise.

Coakley seeks to show that “true divine ‘empowerment’ occurs most unimpededly in the context of a special form of human ‘vulnerability’” (ibid., 32). This effort is a response to two connected theological discourses: ‘neo-orthodox’ and ‘postliberal’ (male) theologians’ influential “new valorization of Christic ‘vulnerability’, an admission of divine self-limitation and exposure in the face of human cruelty,” especially in the wake of Holocaust, in which discourse “Submission has become paradoxically identified with divine ‘power’” (ibid., xiv-xv); and feminist theology’s reaction to that which has its own problems that will be delineated below. It is interesting to see that in a way the two discourses might be regarded as being represented by Yoder and Schüssler Fiorenza in their discussions of the Haustafeln: Yoder’s overly emphasized second movement, the willing subordination, over against the first, the liberating impact of the gospel that made it possible in the first place, for example, and Schüssler Fiorenza’s own limitations in refuting his points.

Coakley first acknowledges feminists’ vexation at and “rightful protest” to the male theologians’ “revalorization of submission”:

For how can the call for the liberation of the powerless and oppressed, especially of women, possibly coexist with a revalorization of any form of ‘submission’ – divine or otherwise? Precisely as male theology has wallowed in a new adulation of ‘vulnerability’ and ‘receptivity’ (perhaps aiming – consciously or unconsciously – to incorporate a repressed ‘femininity’ into its dogmatic system),
feminist theology has emerged to make its rightful protest. Such a strategy, it has urged, merely reinstatates, in legitimated doctrinal form, the sexual, physical and emotional abuse that feminism seeks to expose. An abused God merely legitimates abuse. (Ibid., xv)

As a feminist herself, she is well aware of “the profound, and continuing, damage to women from sexual and physical abuse, even in ‘Christian’ families and churches” and of its legitimation by “men otherwise committed to disciplined religious practice and the rhetoric of cruciform redemption” (ibid., 33). She does not underestimate these difficulties, but at the same time she refuses to identify this “dangerous or regrettable state” of vulnerability in general with the spiritual kenōsis she is advancing here.

For Coakley, the problems that feminist theologians show in their response to the male scholars’ renewed emphasis on vulnerability and submission are exemplified in Daphne Hampson. Hampson’s critique of another feminist theologian, Rosemary Radford Ruether’s view that Jesus’ kenōsis offers a challenge to patriarchy becomes the basis of Coakley’s questioning of feminist practices of “aping the ‘masculinism’ they criticize” (ibid., 32). Hampson regards female autonomy as a supreme good and for her, kenotic Christology does not enhance it, but only undermines it. She argues, “for women, the theme of self-emptying and self-abnegation is far from helpful as a paradigm.”9 Coakley detects two fundamental problems in Hampson’s criticism of kenōsis: first, that Hampson does not take into account that Jesus eschews ‘masculinist,’ worldly, or bullying forms of power from the outset; and second, that Hampson has fallen into the trap of the gender stereotypes she sets out to refute, by aligning men “with achieved, worldly power” and

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women with vulnerability and self-effacement (ibid., 32, 22). Instead, Coakley suggests “a feminist reconceptualizing of the power of the cross and resurrection” through a Christian practice of contemplation “that transcends the gender stereotypes we are seeking to up-end” (ibid., 33).10

It has been the case within feminist theology that a productive ‘theology of the cross’ has been repressed in face of continued women’s abuse “in the name of the ‘cross’” (ibid., 37). Coakley contends that while it is understandable, this ignoring and deriding is at feminism’s own peril. Her argument is suggestive:

[T]here is another, and longer-term, danger to Christian feminism in the repression of all forms of ‘vulnerability’, and in a concomitant failure to confront issues of fragility, suffering or ‘self-emptying’ except in terms of victimology. And that is ultimately the failure to embrace a feminist reconceptualizing of the power of the cross and resurrection. Only, I suggest, by facing – and giving new expression to – the paradoxes of ‘losing one’s life in order to save it’, can feminists hope to construct a vision of the Christic ‘self’ that transcends the gender stereotypes we are seeking to up-end. (Ibid., 33)

She is aware of possible misunderstandings on the part of feminists that contemplative prayer – “this special ‘self-emptying’” in front of God – “encourages societal ‘submissiveness’, dissociated introversion, apolitical anaesthesia, or the silencing of ‘woman’” (ibid., 36, xvii). She acknowledges “what a perilous path [she is] treading” by suggesting empowerment through vulnerability in their eyes. However, without a renewed understanding of power in vulnerability, Coakley argues, Christian feminism would end up defeating itself.

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10 As I noted earlier (See pp. 140-41), my reservations about Schüssler Fiorenza’s arguments are similar to those of Sarah Coakley about Daphne Hampson’s.
Sharon Welch shares this concern about the failures within feminist circles that come from internal conflicts. She says, “In contrast to claims that women have been socialized to be better than men at cooperation and communication, I claim that women, even feminist women, are just as bad at communication, just as bad at working together as men.”\textsuperscript{11} She focuses on the power issue inside feminist camps – “the evasions of the complexity of power, the evasions of the value of conflict, the fears of exercising power oneself or seeing it exercised by other women.”\textsuperscript{12} Welch asks hard questions:

My focus is on the conflicts that occur within groups that share a commitment to social justice and yet find themselves in debilitating and destructive power struggles. Why is it so hard for us to maintain coalitions? … Why do we find ourselves so often locked in conflict with each other just as we have the opportunity to transform the structures of our workplaces? … Why do we defeat ourselves?\textsuperscript{13}

One finds echoes of these concerns in Coakley who points out the “dangers of a busy pragmatism in matters of feminist reform” such as “to leap to the supposedly clear-cut goal of ‘justice’ without delicate training in \textit{attending} to the ‘other’; to impose programmes of reform without considering \textit{self}-reform and \textit{self}-knowledge” and “to up-end ‘patriarchal’ power without considering the possibility of the mimetic \textit{feminist} abuse of power” (\textit{Powers}, xvii).

When we work for any reformation of power relations, the solution does not lie in the change of role players but in the reformulation of power itself. Unless the paradigm is changed, the same type of conflicts persists. The solution Coakley offers is “a feminist

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., xvi.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., xv-xvi.
version of *kenōsis* which will … show a way beyond the Ruether-Hampson exchange” (ibid., 31). She seeks to show “a ‘strength made perfect *in* (human) weakness’ (2 Corinthians 12.9), of the normative concurrence in Christ of non-bullying divine ‘power’ with ‘self-effaced’ humanity” (ibid.). Here are the possibilities of “dogmatic conclusions about the normative relations of divine ‘powers’ to the human” in the studies of the Christic hymn of Phil. 2, the third of which is Coakley’s preference. Does Jesus’ self-emptying in his incarnation show

(1) temporarily *relinquishing* divine powers which are Christ’s by right (as cosmic redeemer); or (2) *pretending* to relinquish divine powers whilst actually retaining them (as gnostic redeemer); or (3) choosing *never to have* certain (false and worldly) forms of power – forms sometimes wrongly construed as ‘divine’; or (4) *revealing* ‘divine power’ to be intrinsically ‘humble’ rather than ‘grasping’?

Discarding “masculinist purposes, masculinist visions of the subduing of the weaker by the stronger,” “a vision of divine power as forceful obliteration” (ibid., 15-16), Coakley suggests the third option above as the “version of *kenōsis* as not only compatible with feminism, but vital to a distinctively Christian manifestation of it, a manifestation which does not eschew, but embraces, the spiritual paradoxes of ‘losing one’s life in order to save it’” (ibid., 4). The values Jesus promoted were different from worldly power, and “In his ethical example patriarchy was emptied out” (ibid., 10). Coakley concludes, “Jesus may be the male messenger to *empty* ‘patriarchal’ values” (ibid., 25). The contemplative exercise, which is “power-in-vulnerability” and “the willed effacement to

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14 Coakley adds two more options later: “(5) the divine Logos’s *taking on* of human flesh in the incarnation, but without loss, impairment, or restriction of divine powers” and “(6) a temporary retracting (or withdrawing into ‘potency’) of certain characteristics of divinity during the incarnate life” in *Powers*, 14, 19.
a gentle omnipotence,” “far from ‘complementing’ masculinism, acts as its undoing” (ibid., 37). And its goal is “our assimilation of Christ’s ‘kenotic’ cross and resurrection” (ibid., 39), and it resonates with Yoder’s theology of the cross.

As Zimmerman points out, for Yoder, “Jesus’ life, death, and proclamation of the reign of God has economic and political implications that are relevant in the contemporary world.” His conviction is “that suffering love and nonviolent social engagement are central norms for Christian life.”¹⁵ He defines violence as “intentional harm done to the physical or psychic integrity of anyone” and nonviolence as “the intentional renunciation of intent to harm.”¹⁶ Not just war but all the abuses “are equally incompatible with a Christian ethic.”¹⁷ He understands subordination as the integral part of Christian stance of nonviolence, even though it is “one of the most misunderstood parts of Yoder’s theology.”¹⁸ Yoder connects the theme of the Haustafeln and Phil. 2:

Further attention to the motif of subordination as it is urged upon the slave (1 Pet. 2:13ff., 19ff.), or upon wives and children (Eph. 5:21ff.; Col. 3:18ff.), shows the reason to be that Jesus Christ himself accepted subordination and humiliation (Phil. 2:5ff.). The willingness to suffer is then not merely a test of our patience or a dead space of waiting; it is itself a participation in the character of God’s victorious patience with the rebellious powers of creation. We subject ourselves to government because it was in so doing that Jesus revealed and achieved God’s victory. (PJ, 209)

His point on our subordination to government still stands when we talk about our mutual, willing subordination to one another in a world dominated by violence and counter-

¹⁵ Zimmerman, 24.
¹⁷ Zimmerman, 92.
¹⁸ Ibid., 130.
violence. Through our voluntary subordination, “The church participates in Jesus’ revolutionary subordination to the ‘powers’ and in his triumph over them.”\textsuperscript{19}

Oppression and violence are not inherent parts of the will of God. Rather, “Unjust and violent social structures are human constructions.”\textsuperscript{20} Choosing violence in our relations with one another as believers and with our enemies in the name of the lesser evil is a denial of Jesus’ cross and resurrection. Brock’s question about “how the church can embody an eschatological witness to an age of rampant divorce through its embodiment of marriage” is helpful. He asks “how Christian married couples are to live revolutionary subordination in the face of both the denial of social roles of modern egalitarianism and the latent patriarchalism that has learned to clothe itself in egalitarian rhetoric” (\textit{Singing}, 47). The answer lies in the critical and patient engagement of the Scripture, in its doxological reading, which will transform “the many rationalities and languages of this world” and enable us to “discern what God intends for us, the good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:2)” (ibid., xvi).

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 218.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 243.
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BIOGRAPHY

In-Yong Lee was born on November 3, 1962 in Inchon, South Korea. She earned a B.A. in 1985 and an M.A. in English Language and Literature in 1990 from Ewha Women’s University; an M.Div. in 2000 and a Th.M. in 2002 from Duke Divinity School. In her Ph.D. program, she has been a recipient of John Wesley Fellowship from A Foundation for Theological Education. She is an ordained elder in the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, and has been serving St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Asheville, NC since 2007. She is married to Hee-Soo Kim and has two sons, Ju-Heung and Ju-Sung Kim, who go to University of North Carolina at Asheville.