ABSTRACT

Slaves in the Christian Household: The Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* in Context

While Colossians 4:1a and Ephesians 6:9a issue different commands to masters, both commands use language which, if pressed literally, threatens to erase any distinction between master and slave. Nevertheless, the *Haustafeln* (household codes) in which these commands appear clearly assume the continuation of slavery in the Christian community. Most scholars thus insist that these two commands are merely conventional exhortations to treat slaves decently. No one, however, has attempted to explain why both *Haustafeln* at precisely the same point employ such vague and provocative language. Drawing on a wide array of neglected evidence from Greco-Roman, Jewish, and patristic sources, I argue that the peculiar language employed in the *Haustafeln* is not accidental, but instead reflects a consistent and distinctively Pauline approach to Christian slavery.

Slaves in the Christian Household:

The Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* in Context

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CHAPTER 1:
Thesis and Structure

While the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* are quite similar, they issue different commands to masters. The command in Colossians reads, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε (Col 4:1), while the parallel command in Ephesians reads, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς, ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν (Eph 6:9). Nevertheless, despite sharing no vocabulary except the article, both commands employ language which, if pressed literally, threatens to erase any distinction between master and slave. The term ἰσότης typically means equality.[1] Likewise, the antecedent of τὰ αὐτὰ is never limited to exclude the commands concerning obedience and service which dominate the preceding word to slaves (Eph 6:5–8). Thus Col 4:1 is easily read as a command to grant slaves equality, and Eph 6:9 is easily read as a command to serve slaves.

However, since both *Haustafeln* clearly envision the continuation of the slave/master relationship within the Christian community, most scholars promptly dismiss the possibility that these radical interpretations were intended. Concerning Col 4:1, Robert McL. Wilson's view is typical: "Masters could scarcely be called upon to grant their slaves equality! The meaning required here is 'equity' or 'fairness.'"[2] Likewise, most scholars insist that Eph 6:9 "cannot be taken literally."[3] As John Muddiman explains,

> No action of a slave towards a master has been mentioned in verses 5–8 which could reasonably be reciprocated by the master towards the slave. Presumably, what Paul meant

[1] See the extensive discussion of ἰσότης in Chapter 4. Note that all lexicons list "equality" first as the meaning of ἰσότης [so BDAG 481; LSJ 840; GE 989]. In some lexicons, this is the only meaning given [so L&N 1:589 (58.32); *PGL* 677].

[2] Robert McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 287.

[3] Thomas M. Winger, *Ephesians*, Concordia (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2015), 669.

> to say was that slavery to Christ, doing the will of God from the heart and serving with enthusiasm, are common Christian obligations for masters and slaves alike.[4]

Monographs and articles on the *Haustafeln* rarely devote more than a few sentences to this issue, and many studies ignore it altogether.[5]

Nevertheless, the majority view requires us to accept without explanation the remarkable coincidence that in both *Haustafeln* the authors at precisely the same point unintentionally use language which, if pressed literally, undermines the distinction between master and slave. Thus it is surprising that scholars have not given more attention to the possibility that the language employed in both Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 is *intentionally* ambiguous and provocative. Note also that Paul's language in Phlm 16 is routinely described as both "radical"[6] and "highly ambiguous."[7] Aside from Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9, Philemon is the only text in the Pauline corpus in which a master is given instructions concerning the treatment of a slave. If Phlm 16 is indeed ambiguous and provocative, then it becomes even more difficult to attribute the peculiar language of Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 to mere accident.

In this study, I argue that the commands τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε and τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς are best explained as an attempt to advance the ideal of Christian equality as far as possible within the practical constraints imposed by the slave/master relationship. Faced with the dilemma of Christian brothers living together as master and slave, the authors of the *Haustafeln* could only issue commands to masters in vague and suggestive language. Anything

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[4] John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, BNTC (New York: Hendrickson, 2001), 281.

[5] See the survey of literature in Chapter 2.

[6] Craig S. de Vos, "Once a Slave, Always a Slave? Slavery, Manumission and Relational Patterns in Paul's Letter to Philemon," *JSNT* 82 (2001): 89–105, esp. 104.

[7] John M. G. Barclay, "Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership," *NTS* 37.2 (1991): 161–86, esp. 171. See the discussion in Chapter 6.

more precise would either (1) be impossible to implement within the slave/master context, or (2) fall below the ideal of Christian brotherhood. The commands to the slaves, on the other hand, are unambiguous because the vocation of a slave aligns perfectly with the vocation of a Christian (Matt 20:24–28; 23:11; Mark 10:41–45; John 13:1–15; 1 Cor 9:19; Gal 5:13; Phil 2:5–8; etc.). It is the vocation of a master which is in serious tension with the Christian calling and which thus presented the authors of the *Haustafeln* with such an intractable dilemma.

This thesis challenges several popular theories concerning the *Haustafeln*. First, in asserting that Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 were intended to promote equality between master and slave, my thesis challenges the notion that the *Haustafeln* were intended to suppress egalitarianism in the Christian communities by bolstering conventional social hierarchies.[8] Second, while the *Haustafeln* are often contrasted with Paul's undisputed epistles, my thesis suggests a striking degree of continuity between the two, at least on the issue of slavery.[9] Finally, while many scholars consider the *Haustafeln* conventional or even regressive in their approach to slavery, my thesis places the *Haustafeln* among the more progressive texts of the first century.[10]

My argument is structured as follows. Chapters 2 and 3 are focused on the history of interpretation. I begin in Chapter 2 with a survey of the modern scholarship on the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln*. I show that while scholars remain deeply divided on a number of key questions concerning the origin and intention of the codes, they have not yet explored the "remarkable coincidence" discussed above. In Chapter 3, I examine the earliest extant citations

[8] For the view that the *Haustafeln* were intended to suppress egalitarianism, see Sections 2.4.3 and 2.4.4 below.

[9] For the view that the *Haustafeln* demonstrate significant discontinuity with Paul, see Section 2.5.1 below.

[10] For the view that the *Haustafeln* are conventional or regressive in their approach to social relations, see Section 2.3 below.

of Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9, most of which have been entirely ignored in the modern discussion of the *Haustafeln*. I demonstrate that both the interpretation of Col 4:1 as a command to treat slaves as equals and the interpretation of Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves were popular in the early church, despite the continuation of Christian slavery.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I challenge the modern consensus that Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 are straightforward and conventional exhortations to treat slaves decently. In chapter 4, I examine the meaning of ἰσότης in Col 4:1. While a handful of scholars have questioned the interpretation of ἰσότης as "fairness" instead of "equality," I offer a far more detailed and comprehensive critique. In Chapter 5, I consider the recent argument that Eph 5:21 does not envision mutual submission. I provide a thorough defense of the traditional interpretation of ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις and demonstrate that these words lend strong support to the literal interpretation of Eph 6:9.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I offer an explanation for the peculiar language found in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9. In Chapter 6, I examine Phlm 16 and argue that Paul's language in this verse is similar to the vague and provocative language found in the *Haustafeln*. While acknowledging significant differences between Philemon and the *Haustafeln*, I propose that one can discern in these texts a consistent and distinctive strategy in addressing Christian slave masters. In Chapter 7, I turn to the social and rhetorical context of the Pauline epistles to offer an explanation for this strategy. I argue that Christian slavery presented the Pauline authors with a complex dilemma for which there was no simple solution. It is this dilemma, and not careless accident, which provides the most plausible explanation for the peculiar language employed in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9. I conclude in Chapter 8 by summarizing my findings from Chapters 3–7 and applying them to the unresolved questions surveyed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2:
Modern Scholarship on the Haustafeln

Over the past century, the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* have been the subject of extensive research and debate. This complex discussion involves a web of interrelated questions concerning (1) the relationship between the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln*, (2) the sources which influenced the *Haustafeln*, (3) the relationship of the *Haustafeln* to cultural norms, (4) the occasion and purpose of the *Haustafeln*, and (5) the relationship of the *Haustafeln* to Paul. In this chapter, I first survey the modern scholarship on these questions and highlight the profound lack of consensus. I then argue that despite the attention which the *Haustafeln* have received, scholars have overlooked an important aspect of the codes that merits further exploration.

2.1. The Relationship Between the Colossian and Ephesian Haustafeln

Scholars generally agree that the Ephesian *Haustafel* is a modification and expansion of the Colossian *Haustafel*.[1] Nevertheless, several other reconstructions have been offered. First, Winsome Monroe argues that both *Haustafeln* are later additions to the epistles in which they appear. Munro proposes that while Ephesians was dependent on Colossians, the *Haustafel* which was added to Colossians was an abbreviation of the *Haustafel* which was added to Ephesians.[2] Second, John Muddiman argues that the "precise source" for the Ephesians *Haustafel* is not Colossians but a text "very like" Colossians.[3] According to Muddiman, this text is the lost letter

[1] For a defense of the literary dependency of Ephesians on Colossians, see C. Leslie Mitton, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: Its Authorship, Origin and Purpose* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 55–74.

[2] Winsome Munro, "Col 3:18–4:1 and Eph 5:21–6:9: Evidences of a Late Literary Stratum?," *NTS* 18.4 (1972): 434–47.

[3] Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 255.

which Paul wrote to Laodicea (Col 4:16).[4] Finally, Ernest Best and Robert Wilson suggest that the authors of Colossians and Ephesians were both drawing independently on an earlier piece of tradition.[5]

Furthermore, even among those scholars who agree that the Ephesian *Haustafel* is dependent on the Colossian *Haustafel*, disagreement exists concerning the nature of the Ephesian redaction. Some scholars characterize this redaction as an accommodation to surrounding culture. Eduard Schweizer speaks of the "paganization of the *Haustafeln* under the guise of Christianization" (*Paganisierung der Haustafeln unter dem Gewand der Christianisierung*). In commanding wives to submit "as to the Lord" (Eph 5:22) and slaves to obey "as to Christ" (Eph 6:5), Schweizer detects a movement towards the view that social hierarchies reflect "a divinely legitimated cosmic order" (*eine göttlich legitimierte kosmische Ordnung*).[6] Similarly, Angela Standhartinger argues that while the Colossian *Haustafel* was adopted merely to protect the community from accusations of disrupting the social order (see Section 2.4.4 below), Ephesians sets the *Haustafel* "in the center of its theology" (*in das Zentrum seiner Theologie*) and grounds patriarchal hierarchy in "the cosmic reality of Christ and the church" (*der kosmischen Wirklichkeit Christi und der* ekklesia).[7] Furthermore, Standhartinger argues that the authors of

[4] Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 21.

[5] Ernest Best, "Who Used Whom? The Relationship of the Ephesians and Colossians," *NTS* 43.1 (1997): 72–96, esp. 80–81; Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 523, 575; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 289.

[6] Eduard Schweizer, "Die Weltlichkeit des Neuen Testamentes: Die Haustafeln," in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift für Walther Zimmerli zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Herbert Donner, Robert Hanhart, and Rudolf Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 397–413, esp. 407–13.

[7] Angela Standhartinger, *Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte & Intention des Kolosserbriefs*, NovTSup 94 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 276.

Ephesians have removed certain subtly subversive elements from the Colossian *Haustafel* in order to bring the code in line with the conventional "Roman-Hellenistic mentality."[8]

Other scholars, however, reach precisely the opposite conclusion. Ben Witherington, who defends the Pauline authorship of both epistles, argues that the *Haustafel* in Ephesians is more explicitly countercultural than the version in Colossians.[9] Witherington attributes this to differences in the "rhetorical situation" of the two epistles.[10] He argues that the epistle to the Colossians is merely Paul's "opening gambit" with these believers, and thus Paul chooses not to "fire all of his guns."[11] While she rejects the Pauline authorship of both epistles, Lisa Marie Belz also finds the Ephesian *Haustafel* more radical than the Colossian *Haustafel*. Belz argues that the Colossian *Haustafel* represents a significant departure from Paul's egalitarianism, but the redaction of this code in Ephesians reveals a "tenacious refusal ... to let go of Paul's idealism." According to Belz, the author of Ephesians revised the Colossian *Haustafel* to bring it more in line with the egalitarian sentiments expressed in Paul's authentic letters.[12] Furthermore, Belz suggests that certain elements of the code, including the command to mutual subordination in Eph 5:21, go "even further than Paul."[13]

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[8] Angela Standhartinger, "The Origin and Intention of the Household Code in the Letter to the Colossians," *JSNT* 23.79 (2001): 117–30, esp. 128–29. So also Standhartinger, *Studien*, 275–76.

[9] Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 181–96, 313–43; Ben Witherington, *The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical Thought World of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 2:645–82.

[10] Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 10–11, 282–83.

[11] Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:647.

[12] Lisa Marie Belz, "Proper Household Relations in Whose Basileia?: Examining Ephesians' Subtle Revisions to the Household Code of Colossians," *CBW* 34 (2014): 226–49, esp. 245.

[13] Lisa Marie Belz, "The Rhetoric of Gender in the Household of God: Ephesians 5:21–33 and Its Place in Pauline Tradition" (PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2013), 250.

In between these two views, Best argues that Eph 6:5–9 contains certain differences from Col 3:22–4:1 which appear to increase the Christian character of the code, but also contains other differences which appear to decrease the Christian character of the code. Thus no trajectory can be discerned. Best cites this as evidence for his view that the *Haustafeln* were composed independently by separate authors drawing from the same tradition.[14]

2.2. The Sources which Influenced the Haustafeln

While no precise parallel has been discovered, numerous elements of both the form and content of the *Haustafeln* appear throughout Jewish and Greco-Roman literature. Scholars thus agree that the *Haustafeln* were influenced to some degree by external sources, but they disagree on both the identity of these sources and the extent of the influence.

2.2.1. The Identity of the Sources

In 1913 Martin Dibelius suggested that the *Haustafel* was derived from a Stoic schema of duties which may have been mediated to the Christians through Hellenistic Judaism.[15] This thesis, which was developed further by Dibelius' student Karl Weidinger, exerted considerable influence on subsequent scholarship.[16] As late as 1980, Dieter Lührmann could assert that this

[14] Best, "Who Used Whom?," 80–81.

[15] Martin Dibelius, *An die Kolosser Epheser an Philemon*, ed. Heinrich Greeven, 3rd ed., HNT 12 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953), 47–50. The first edition was published in 1913. Key texts cited in support of a Stoic origin for the *Haustafeln* include the following: Sen. Y. *Ep.* 94.1; *Ben.* 2.18.1–2; Epict. *Diatr.* 2.10.1–30; 14.8; 17.31–33; Diog. Laert. 7.108; Hierocles *Approp. Acts*; Polyb. 18.41.8–9. For a translation of Hierocles, see Ilaria Ramelli, *Hierocles the Stoic: Elements of Ethics, Fragments and Excerpts*, trans. David Konstan (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2009), 63–96.

[16] Karl Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln, ein Stück urchristlicher Paränese*, UNT 14 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1928).

thesis was still widely regarded as "conclusive" (*schlüssig*).[17] Nevertheless, critics of the theory pointed to significant differences between the Stoic duty lists and the *Haustafeln*.[18] James E. Crouch concluded that the Stoic schema was not merely transmitted but also significantly modified by Hellenistic Judaism.[19]

In a seminal study published in 1980, David L. Balch argued that both the Christian *Haustafeln* and many of the Stoic and Hellenistic Jewish parallels cited by previous scholars were ultimately derived from an older *topos* on household management (περὶ οἰκονομίας) rooted in the political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.[20] While Balch found the closest parallels to the

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[17] Dieter Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln und antike Ökonomie," *NTS* 27.1 (1980): 83–97, esp. 83–84. See also Schweizer, "Weltlichkeit," 401–2; Stephen Motyer, "The Relationship Between Paul's Gospel of 'All One in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28) and the 'Household Codes,'" *VE* 19 (1989): 33–48, esp. 34.

[18] On these differences, see John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 170–83; Wolfgang Schrage, "Zur Ethik der neutestamentlichen Haustafeln," *NTS* 21.1 (1974): 1–22, esp. 6–7; David Schroeder, "Ethical Lists," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume*, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 546–47; Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln," 84–85; Klaus Berger, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1984), 136; Klaus Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament," in *ANRW* 25.2:1031–1432, esp. 1079; Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 248–49; Klaus Berger, *Formen und Gattungen im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Francke, 2005), 196–97.

[19] James E. Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel*, FRLANT 109 (Gõttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 146–49. So also Karl Martin Fischer, *Tendenz und Absicht des Epheserbriefes*, FRLANTL (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 162–64. Key Hellenistic Jewish parallels to the *Haustafeln* include the following: Ps.-Phoc. 195–227; Philo *Decalogue* 165–67; *Hypothetica* 7.1–8, 14; *Posterity* 181; *Spec. Laws* 2.225–27; Jos. *Ag. Ap.* 2.190–219; 4 Macc. 2:10–13. For a translation of Ps.-Phocylides, see Walter T. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, CEJL (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

[20] David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, SBLMS 26 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), esp. 26–29, 34, 38–58, 117. See also David L. Balch, "Household Ethical Codes in Peripatetic, Neopythagorean and Early Christian Moralists," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1977*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier, SBLSP 11 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 397–404. Key texts in the περὶ οἰκονομίας tradition include the following: Plato *Leg.* 690A–C; 772D–824C; Arist. *Pol.* 1, esp. 1.2.1 [1252A–1260B, esp. 1253B]; [*Oec.*]; Xen. *Oec.*; Philod. *Prop.*; Arius Did. *Epit.* 99.2.8–100.1.29 [148.1–149.24]; Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 2.25.2–27.5. For a

Haustafeln in Neopythagorean texts, he remained open to the popular view that the ethic was mediated to the Christians through Hellenistic Judaism.[21] In addition to Balch, Lührmann and Klaus Thraede independently concluded that the *Haustafeln* were indebted to the περὶ οἰκονομίας tradition.[22] Today this thesis is so widely accepted that Margaret Y. MacDonald, following James D. G. Dunn, concludes that "the broad issue of origins" is "settled."[23]

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translation of Arius Didymus, see Georgia Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome of Peripatetic Ethics, Household Management, and Politics: An Edition with Translation," in *Arius Didymus on Peripatetic Ethics, Household Management, and Politics: Text, Translation, and Discussion*, ed. William W. Fortenbaugh, RUSCH 20 (New York: Routledge, 2018), 14–63. For a translation of Philodemus, see Voula Tsouna, *Philodemus: On Property Management*, WGRW 33 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2012).

[21] David L. Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists and the New Testament Household Codes," in *ANRW* 26.1:380–411, esp. 408. See also Balch, *Wives*, 120. Neopythagorean texts cited by Balch include Ps.-Charondas 62.30–36, which is also discussed in Standhartinger, "Origin," 120–22. Scholars who argue that the *Haustafel* entered Christianity through Hellenistic Judaism include Schrage, "Zur Ethik," 7; Siegfried Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik* (Zürich: TVZ, 1987), 567; Georg Strecker, "Die neutestamentlichen Haustafeln (Kol 3:18–4:1 und Eph 5:22–6:9)," in *Neues Testament und Ethik: Für Rudolf Schnackenburg*, ed. Helmut Merklein (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 349–75, esp. 358–59; David Hellholm, "Die Gattung Haustafel im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief: Ihre Position innerhalb der Paränese-Abschnitte und ihr Hintergrund in der spätantiken Gesellschaft," in *Kolosser-Studien*, ed. Peter Müller, Biblisch-Theologische Studien 103 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2009), 103–28, esp. 127.

[22] Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln," 85–86; Klaus Thraede, "Zum historischen Hintergrund der 'Haustafeln' des NT," in *Pietas: Festschrift für Bernhard Kötting*, ed. Ernst Dassmann and K. Suso Frank, JAC Ergänzungsband 8 (Münster: Aschendorffsche, 1980), 359–68, esp. 362–64; Franz Laub, *Die Begegnung des frühen Christentums mit der antiken Sklaverei* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1982), 83–98.

[23] Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Beyond Identification of the Topos of Household Management: Reading the Household Codes in Light of Recent Methodologies and Theoretical Perspectives in the Study of the New Testament," *NTS* 57.1 (2011): 65–90, esp. 66; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 243. Similar sentiments are expressed by Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Colossians," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 313–24, esp. 321; Sarah J. Tanzer, "Ephesians," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 325–48, esp. 330–331; Wayne A. Meeks, "The 'Haustafeln' and American Slavery: A Hermeneutical Challenge," in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 232–53, esp. 242–43;

Nevertheless, Klaus Berger and others emphasized significant differences between the *Haustafeln* and the lengthy treatises on household management. Berger proposed that the *Haustafeln* emerged when diverse gnomic sentences were gathered into "nests" (*Nestern*) around common themes.[24] More recently, Benjamin G. Wold and others have highlighted striking similarities between the Ephesian *Haustafel* and *4QInstruction* (esp. 4Q416 2 I–IV).[25] These scholars stress the influence of Palestinian Judaism on the *Haustafeln*.[26]

James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 666; Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Household Code and Wisdom Mode of Colossians," *JSNT* 74 (1999): 93–112, esp. 100; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, SP 17 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000), 160; Allan R. Bevere, *Sharing in the Inheritance: Identity and the Moral Life in Colossians*, JSNTSup 226 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 228–29; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 239–94; Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 230; Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 179–80.

[24] Berger, *Formen*, 196–201; Berger, *Formgeschichte*, 135–41. Note that Berger's contribution is overlooked in several key summaries of the debate, including David L. Balch, "Household Codes," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres*, ed. David E. Aune, SBLSBS 21 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25–50; MacDonald, "Beyond Identification." On the differences between the *Haustafeln* and the περὶ οἰκονομίας treatises, see also Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 724–25. On the influence of the gnomic tradition on the *Haustafel*, see also Hellholm, "Gattung," 111–12, 127. Berger and Hellholm both cite the cluster of gnomic precepts in Plut. [*Lib. ed.*] 10 [*Mor*. 7E].

[25] Benjamin G. Wold, "Family Ethics in *4QInstruction* and the New Testament," *NovT* 50.3 (2008): 286–300, esp. 292; Jean-Sébastien Rey, "Family Relationships in *4QInstruction* and in Eph 5:21–6:4," in *Echoes from the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament*, ed. Florentino García Martínez (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 231–55; James Thompson, *Moral Formation According to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 190–200. For text and English translation of *4QInstruction*, see Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[26] While Wold does not deny that Hellenistic sources influenced the NT *Haustafeln*, he argues that "Palestinian exegetical traditions" may have played a role as well. Wold suggests that the exegetical traditions found in *4QInstruction* also influenced Philo *Decalogue* 165–67 ["Family Ethics," 300]. Rey concludes that the Ephesian *Haustafel* is influenced by "Palestinian Judaism's Wisdom Literature" ["Family Relationships," 255; so also Lincoln, "Household Code," 104]. Thompson emphasizes that unlike the *topos* on household management, the Jewish legal and

2.2.2. The Extent of the Influence

As stated above, scholars disagree not only on the identity of the sources behind the *Haustafeln* but also on the extent to which the *Haustafeln* are dependent on such sources. According to some scholars, the *Haustafeln* are merely a light Christianization of an existing form. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes them as an "adaption of a Greco-Roman or Jewish-Hellenistic philosophical-theological code" which is not "genuinely Christian."[27] J. Albert Harrill likewise states that the "literary form" is not "unique to Christianity."[28] Best, who characterizes the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* as "simplistic" and "pastorally defective," stresses that they ignore the many complex difficulties that surely faced Christians living in non-Christian households. Best concludes that the form originated in non-Christian circles, where husband, wife, child, and slave all followed the same religion. The authors of the *Haustafeln* simply "transferred" this form "to Christian households without a realization of the changes that needed to be made."[29]

Nevertheless, many scholars reject the notion that the authors of the *Haustafeln* merely adopted a preexisting form. Lars Hartman warns against confusing "a socially given thought pattern with conventionally established literary forms." He argues that while the authors of the *Haustafeln* "were certainly influenced by their social environment in the normal human way,"

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wisdom traditions closely resemble the "apodictic style" of the *Haustafeln* [*Moral Formation*, 190–200; see also Schroeder, "Lists," 546–47]. Texts cited by Thompson include Exod 20:12; 21:20–21, 26–27; 23:12; Lev 20:9; Deut 5:14, 16; 6:7; 21:18–21; 27:16; Prov 5:18–19; 6:20; 13:24; 19:18; 23:13; Sir 3:1–16; 7:19–28; 30:1–13.

[27] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 2nd ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 254. So also Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 275.

[28] J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 86.

[29] Best, *Ephesians*, 524–27.

there is little evidence to support the notion that the *Haustafeln* "represent a particular literary convention – a form or *Gattung*."[30] Witherington and others likewise find "no evidence of a fixed household code in the Greco-Roman or the Jewish world."[31] James P. Hering describes the *Haustafel* as "a unique Christian composition" whose creators were merely "familiar with the broad brush-strokes of the contemporary discussion."[32]

2.3. The Relationship of the Haustafeln to Cultural Norms

Many scholars insist that while the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* appear on the surface to wholeheartedly endorse traditional hierarchies, they resist, transform, or subvert those hierarchies in significant ways.[33] According to some scholars, this subversion is quite subtle.

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[30] Lars Hartman, "Some Unorthodox Thoughts on the 'Household-Code Form,'" in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 219–32, esp. 229–30. See also Hermann von Lips, "Die Haustafel als 'Topos' im Rahmen der urchristlichen Paränese: Beobachtungen anhand des 1. Petrusbriefes und des Titusbriefes," *NTS* 40.2 (1994): 261–80, esp. 280.

[31] Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:662. So also Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, SNTSMS 59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 47; Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 147–48; Dunn, *Colossians*, 243–44; Bevere, *Sharing*, 239.

[32] James P. Hering, *The Colossian and Ephesian Haustafeln in Theological Context: An Analysis of Their Origins, Relationship, and Message* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 60, 260. Franz Laub describes the *Haustafel* as "an early Christian creation" (*eine urchristliche Schöpfung*) for which there is "ultimately no analogy" (*letztlich keine Analogie*) ["Sozialgeschichtlicher Hintergrund und ekklesiologische Relevanz der neutestamentlich-frühchristlichen Haus- und Gemeinde-Tafelparänese—ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des Frühchristentums," *MTZ* 37.4 (1986): 249–71, esp. 261, 268–69; so also Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 275–76; Sumney, *Colossians*, 230]. While acknowledging that the *Haustafel* is "indebted to the attitudes and social conventions of the Greco-Roman world," Outi Leppä suggests that the code was created "without any prototypes" [*The Making of Colossians: A Study on the Formation and Purpose of a Deutero-Pauline Letter* (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 2003), 176, 191].

[33] Yoder, *Politics*, 180–82; Witherington, *Women*, 153–54, 156; Dunn, *Paul*, 701; Y. C. Whang, "Cohabitation or Conflict: Greek Household Management and Christian *Haustafeln*," in *Religion and Sexuality*, ed. Michael A. Hayes, Wendy Porter, and David Tombs, Studies in Theology and Sexuality 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 85–100, esp. 96–97; Russ Dudrey, "'Submit

Standhartinger argues that while the authors of Colossians were forced to include the *Haustafel* to protect the community from persecution (see Section 2.4.4 below), they hid "a series of clues" (*eine Reihe von Hinweisen*) which indicated to the community that the *Haustafel* was intended to be read "against the grain" (*gegen den Strich*).[34] Jerry L. Sumney likewise finds various "clues" in the text which "indicate that something other than the usual straightforward reading is in order."[35] Following Standhartinger, Sumney argues that the directives of the *Haustafel* "have encoded meanings intended to be understood only by persons in the church."[36]

Other scholars, however, insist that the *Haustafeln* are largely conventional and do not offer any substantial challenge to cultural norms.[37] According to these scholars, the *Haustafeln*

Yourselves to One Another': A Socio-Historical Look at the Household Code of Ephesians 5:15–6:9," *ResQ* 41.1 (1999): 27–44, esp. 41; Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 454; Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 124–26; Bevere, *Sharing*, 246–47; Timothy G. Gombis, "A Radically New Humanity: The Function of the *Haustafel* in Ephesians," *JETS* 48.2 (2005): 317–30, esp. 324; Harry O. Maier, "A Sly Civility: Colossians and Empire," *JSNT* 27.3 (2005): 323–49, esp. 347; Suzanne Watts Henderson, "Taking Liberties with the Text: The Colossians Household Code as Hermeneutical Paradigm," *Int* 60.4 (2006): 420–32, esp. 425; Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 181–96, 313–43; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:645–82; N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 2:1108; Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 162–63. See also Balch, *Wives*, 119; Balch, "Household Codes," 36.

[34] Standhartinger, *Studien*, 274–76. So also Standhartinger, "Origin," 127–30.

[35] Sumney, *Colossians*, 237–42.

[36] Sumney, *Colossians*, 231.

[37] J. L. Houlden, *Ethics and the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 32, 93; Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament: Change and Development* (London: SCM, 1986), 75; Laub, "Sozialgeschichtlicher Hintergrund," 261; Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik*, 567–71, 584–86; Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 176–80, 86–88; Meeks, "Haustafeln", esp. 245, 249–50; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 254; Gillian Beattie, *Women and Marriage in Paul and His Early Interpreters*, JSNTSup 296 (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 75; Harrill, *Slaves*, 85–86; Daniel K. Darko, *No Longer Living as the Gentiles: Differentiation and Shared Ethical Values in Ephesians 4.17–6.9*, LNTS 375 (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 99; Marianne Bjelland Kartzow,

represent "an acceptance of the established political-social status quo of inequality."[38] Some scholars even argue that the *Haustafeln* betray a regressive view of social relations that was in conflict "with the more emancipatory ideas circulating in the Roman Empire."[39] In this debate, those scholars who describe the *Haustafeln* as significantly countercultural are sometimes accused of portraying Jewish and Greco-Roman attitudes "in the worst possible light" so that the Christian texts "will be seen as less ugly (or perhaps even innovative) by contrast."[40]

Nevertheless, the scholarship on this issue cannot be neatly divided into two camps. First, many scholars conclude that the codes are "ideologically complex (neither purely culturally compliant, nor purely culturally resistant)."[41] Furthermore, as discussed in Section 2.1 above, some scholars find one *Haustafel* significantly more countercultural than the other. Finally,

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"'Asking the Other Question': An Intersectional Approach to Galatians 3:28 and the Colossian Household Codes," BibInt 18.4–5 (2010): 364–89, esp. 378; Hector Avalos, *Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Ethics of Biblical Scholarship*, BMW 38 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 2011), 114–16, 119–24; Rikard Roitto, *Behaving as a Christ-Believer: A Cognitive Perspective on Identity and Behavior Norms in Ephesians*, ConBNT 46 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 205; Anders Martinsen, "Was There New Life for the Social Dead in Early Christian Communities? An Ideological-Critical Interpretation of Slavery in the Household Codes," JECH 2.1 (2012): 55–69.

[38] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 254.

[39] Tanzer, "Ephesians," 330–31. So also Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln," 94; Schrage, *Ethics*, 256; Berger, *Formen*, 187. According to Thraede, the *Haustafeln* take a "realistic-humane middle position" (*realistisch-humane Mittelposition*) between the contemporary extremes of "equality" (*Gleichheit*) and "domination" (*Herrschaft*) ["Hintergrund," 367; see also Johannes Woyke, *Die neutestamentlichen Haustafeln: Ein kritischer und konstruktiver Forschungsüberblick*, SBS 184 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000), 59].

[40] Tanzer, "Ephesians," 331. So also Avalos, *Slavery*, 38.

[41] MacDonald, "Beyond Identification," 89–90. So also Balch, "Household Codes," 36; Schrage, *Ethics*, 253, 256; Schrage, *Ethics*, 22; John M. G. Barclay, "Ordinary but Different: Colossians and Hidden Moral Identity," in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 237–55, esp. 254. On the *Haustafel* in 1 Peter, see Sean M. Christensen, "The Balch/Elliott Debate and the Hermeneutics of the Household Code," *TJ* 37.2 (2016): 173–93, esp. 190.

scholars differ considerably in their assessments of which elements of the codes are counter-cultural and the degree to which these elements conflict with contemporary norms. Therefore, having sketched the broad contours of the debate, I will now summarize the discussions surrounding specific sections of the *Haustafel*.

2.3.1. The Exhortation to Wives

Each section in the *Haustafeln* opens with a command for the subordinate member to submit to or obey the dominant member. Many scholars thus find in the *Haustafeln* a decidedly conservative stance, even for the first century. Lührmann, for example, argues that the *Haustafeln* describe a role for women and slaves which "lags behind what was at that time actually achieved and possible" (*zurückbleibt hinter seinerzeit faktisch Erreichtem und Möglichem*).[42] Ehrhard Kamlah and Berger attribute this emphasis on submission to the importance of humility in Christian theology.[43] Similarly, Robert Scott Nash connects the emphasis on submission in the Colossian *Haustafel* with the epistle's emphasis on the lordship of Christ (see Section 2.4.5 below).[44] Balch, however, argues that the "concern for authority and subordination" was rooted in "classical Greek political ethics."[45] Citing Balch's work, Wayne A.

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[42] Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln," 94. So also Schrage, *Ethics*, 256; Tanzer, "Ephesians," 330–31; Berger, *Formen*, 187.

[43] Ehrhard Kamlah, "'Υποτάσσεσθαι in den neutestamentlichen 'Haustafeln,'" in *Verborum Veritas: Festschrift für Gustav Stählin zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Otto Böcher and Klaus Haacker (Wuppertal: Rolf Brockhaus, 1970), 237–43; Berger, *Formen*, 187. See also Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 190–91.

[44] Robert Scott Nash, "Heuristic *Haustafeln*: Domestic Codes as Entrance to the Social World of Early Christianity: The Case of Colossians," in *Religious Writings and Religious Systems*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and A. J. Levine, BSR 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 25–50, esp. 44–50.

[45] Balch, "Household," 398. See also Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists," 395.

Meeks concludes that the *Haustafeln* "signal acceptance" of a "comprehensive vision of society" in which "subjection is essential."[46]

While scholars agree that the submission of the wife is enjoined throughout Jewish and Greco-Roman literature, some argue that the submission described by the *Haustafeln* is substantially different from these parallels.[47] First, the submission commanded in Col 3:18 and Eph 5:22 evidently did not extend to religion (cf. 1 Peter 3:1) and thus differed from the pagan requirement that the wife must eschew all rituals not endorsed by her husband.[48] Furthermore, some scholars contrast the *Haustafeln* with various harsher statements in contemporaneous literature which describe the woman as naturally inferior to the man or in servitude to the man.[49] Some scholars also connect the command to submit in Col 3:18 and Eph 5:22 with the ταπεινοφροσύνη enjoined in Col 3:12 and Eph 4:2 (cf. 1 Pet 5:5). Thus wives become "the exemplars of the humility that characterizes the entire community of believers."[50] Finally, some scholars find significance in the fact that the *Haustafeln* use ὑποτάσσω with wives, while

[46] Meeks, "Haustafeln," 242–45.

[47] See Ps.-Callisth. *Alex.* 1.22.4; Plut. *Conj. praec.* 33 [*Mor.* 142E]; Jos. *Ag. Ap.* 2.201; Philo *Hypothetica* 7.3; Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 2.25.4; Philemon Frag. 132; Dio Cass. 50.28.3.

[48] So Schrage, *Ethics*, 253; Christensen, "Balch/Elliott Debate," 186; Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists," 395. On the expectation that wives follow the religion of their husbands, see Section 7.3 below.

[49] So Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4–6* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 708; Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 185; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:663. On the inferiority of the woman, see Jos. *Ag. Ap.* 2.201; Sir 42:12–14; Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.12 [1254B]; 1.5.2 [1259B]. On the servitude of the wife, see Philo *Hypothetica* 7.3.

[50] Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 195–96. So also Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, trans. Astrid B. Beck, AB 34B (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 433–36. On the positive role of submission and humility in the Jewish tradition, see Job 22:29; Prov 3:34; Let. Aris. 257; cf. Jas 4:6.

reserving ὑπακούω for children and slaves.[51] Others argue that these two terms are used synonymously (see esp. 1 Peter 3:5–6).[52]

Moreover, many scholars suggest that by introducing the Ephesian *Haustafel* with a call for mutual submission (Eph 5:21), the author to some degree relativizes or reinterprets household hierarchies. J. Paul Sampley argues that while the author of Ephesians finds the *Haustafel* form useful for some of his purposes, he "does not entirely agree" with its "posture." Ephesians 5:21 thus serves as "the author's critique of the basic stance of the Haustafel form."[53] However, other scholars object that Eph 5:22–6:9 offers "no indication" that husbands are to submit to wives, fathers to children, or masters to slaves.[54] Some also contend that Eph 5:21 does not envision mutual submission, but is rather a command for some in the community to submit to others in the community, as outlined in the *Haustafel*.[55]

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[51] So Barth, *Ephesians*, 714; Rey, "Family Relationships," 250.

[52] So Thraede, "Hintergrund," 360; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 367–68; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 735; Best, *Ephesians*, 517. In the extant Greek literature, both verbs are used to describe the relation of a wife to her husband. For ὑποτάσσω, see Ps.-Callisth. *Alex.* 1.22.4; Plut. *Conj. praec.* 33 [*Mor.* 142E]. For ὑπακούω, see Jos. *Ag. Ap.* 2.201; Philemon Frag. 132 [ὑπήκοος].

[53] J. Paul Sampley, *"And the Two Shall Become One Flesh": A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21–33*, SNTSMS 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 117. See also Barth, *Ephesians*, 609–10; Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperOne, 1996), 64; Dudrey, "'Submit,'" 40–41; Bauckham, *God*, 126; Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 318–19; Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 372–74; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:661–662; Fowl, *Ephesians*, 186–87.

[54] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 732–34, cf. 716–17. See also Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Rereading Paul: Early Interpreters of Paul on Women and Gender," in *Women & Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 236–54, esp. 245.

[55] So O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 400–404; Gombis, "Radically New," 323–24; Winger, *Ephesians*, 600–602. See the detailed discussion of this issue in Chapter 5.

2.3.2. The Exhortation to Husbands

The dominant member in each section of the *Haustafeln* is commanded to act benevolently towards the subordinate member. According to Witherington, these "strong limiting exhortations" are "what most distinguishes" the *Haustafeln* from Jewish and Greco-Roman parallels.[56] In a study of the Ephesian *Haustafel*, Mark J. Keown goes so far as to suggest that the author is primarily concerned with modifying the behavior of the *paterfamilias*, for he is addressed three different times (as husband, father, and master).[57] However, other scholars find nothing particularly countercultural in these "limiting exhortations." Such scholars emphasize that many Jewish and Greco-Roman moralists exhort the man to behave humanely towards his wife, children, and slaves.[58]

More specifically, scholars disagree on the uniqueness of the command for husbands to love their wives (Col 3:19; Eph 5:25). Some scholars emphasize that parallels to this command are found elsewhere in Jewish and Greco-Roman literature.[59] Others object that such parallels are relatively rare and, moreover, fall short of the type of love required by the *Haustafeln*.[60]

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[56] Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:650. See also Bauckham, *God*, 125.

[57] Mark J. Keown, "Paul's Vision of a New Masculinity (Eph 5:21–6:9)," Colloq 48.1 (2016): 47–60, esp. 59.

[58] So Roitto, *Behaving*, 205. On wives, see Note 59 below. On children, see Note 66 in Section 2.3.3 below. On slaves, see Sections 4.3.1 and 5.3.

[59] So Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik*, 568–69. On love for wives, see Ps.-Phoc. 195; *b. Yebam.* 62b; Mus. Ruf. 13A.2; Plut. *Conj. praec.* 34 [*Mor.* 142E–143A]; Ps.-Charondas 62.30; Pliny *Ep.* 4.19; 6.4, 7; 7.5; Cic. *Fam.* 6 [14.4]; 7 [14.2]; 9.5 [14.3]. See also the discussion in Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 83–90. For a translation of Musonius Rufus, see Cynthia King, *Musonius Rufus: Lectures & Sayings* (William B. Irvine, 2011).

[60] So Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln*, 61–62; Schrage, *Ethics*, 253–54; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374; Whang, "Cohabitation or Conflict," 100; Bauckham, *God*, 125–26; Gombis, "Radically New," 327; Rey, "Family Relationships," 252; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 381–82; Keown, "Paul's Vision," 54–55.

Wolfgang Schrage claims that Eph 5:25 "is something new and unique in the ancient world," for in Ephesians the love required of the husband is defined "in terms of Christ's self-sacrifice."[61] Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke likewise argue that the context of Col 3:14 and 3:17 requires us to interpret 3:19 as a summons to the "servile self-subjugation" exemplified by Christ.[62] Finally, some scholars find significance in the fact that the *Haustafeln* never command the husband to rule his wife. These scholars contrast the *Haustafeln* with various passages throughout the extant literature in which the duty of the wife to submit is paired with the duty of the husband to rule.[63]

2.3.3. The Exhortation to Children and Fathers

The command to obey parents was clearly not countercultural.[64] However, some scholars contrast the exhortation to fathers with passages from Jewish and Greco-Roman literature which

[61] Schrage, *Ethics*, 253–54.

[62] Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 437–38.

[63] So Schrage, "Zur Ethik," 12–13; Schrage, *Ethics*, 253–54; Witherington, *Women*, 158; Gombis, "Radically New," 325; Rey, "Family Relationships," 250; Christensen, "Balch/Elliott Debate," 187. For texts which pair the submission of the wife with the rulership of the husband, see Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 2.25.4; Sen. Y. *Const.* 1.1; Plut. *Conj. praec.* 33 [*Mor.* 142E]; Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.12 [1254B]; 1.5.8 [1260A]. The rulership of the husband is also found in 4Q416 2 III,20–IV,13; Stob. *Anth.* 3.1.173.30.

[64] For a detailed examination of the Jewish and Greco-Roman views on the child-parent relationship, see Peter Balla, *The Child-Parent Relationship in the New Testament and Its Environment* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 6–111. On limits to obedience, see esp. Mus. Ruf. 16.2–4; Epict. *Diatr.* 3.3.5 (cf. πάντα ὑπακούειν in *Diatr.* 2.10.7).

present a much harsher view of paternal discipline.[65] Others emphasize that the concerns expressed in Col 3:21 and Eph 6:4 may be found in non-Christian sources.[66]

2.3.4. The Exhortation to Slaves

Scholars debate the significance of both the form and the content of the exhortation to slaves. Concerning content, some scholars argue that the description of slaves as heirs of an "inheritance" (Col 3:24; cf. Rom 8:15–17; Gal 4:7) indicates that they were accorded an unusual degree of honor in the community.[67] On the other hand, Mary Rose D'Angelo and Anders Martinsen argue that the exhortations in Col 3:22–25 and Eph 6:5–8 reflect and reinforce negative stereotypes of slaves as lazy or sycophantic.[68] Furthermore, Martinsen and Harrill argue that the commands reinforce the domination of the master by internalizing slavery.[69] Scholars

[65] So Schrage, *Ethics*, 255; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:652–54; Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 338–39. See Philo *Spec. Laws* 2.232; Sir 30:1–13; Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 2.26.3–27.5.

[66] So Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik*, 569; Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 197. See Ps.-Phoc. 150, 207–9; Sen. Y. *Ira* 2.21.1–4; Philo *Hypothetica* 7.3; Plut. [*Lib. ed.*] 12 [*Mor.* 8F–9A]. Such parallels are also acknowledged in Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 338; Schrage, *Ethics*, 255.

[67] Dunn, *Colossians*, 257; Standhartinger, "Origin," 127–29; Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Slavery, Sexuality and House Churches: A Reassessment of Colossians 3.18–4.1 in Light of New Research on the Roman Family," *NTS* 53.01 (2007): 94–113, esp. 108; Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Children in House Churches in Light of New Research on Families in the Roman World," in *The World of Jesus and the Early Church: Identity and Interpretation in the Early Communities of Faith*, ed. Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011), 69–85, esp. 81.

[68] D'Angelo, "Colossians," 322; Martinsen, "New Life," 58.

[69] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 90–91; Martinsen, "New Life," 59. Harrill describes Eph 6:6 as attempting "to bind and so to control" the "inner self" (ψυχή) of the slave. According to Harrill, the author of Ephesians hopes that the slave's ψυχή "will be defeated with minimal effort."

also discuss the possibility that the command to obey "in everything" (Col 3:22) was understood to permit the sexual use of slaves.[70]

Concerning form, Jewish and Greco-Roman authors occasionally discuss duties in pairs, and sometimes the subordinate party is placed first.[71] However, as scholars routinely note, a direct address to the subordinate members of the household is unusual.[72] Many argue that this feature of the *Haustafeln* indicates that women, children, and slaves were accorded a surprising degree of honor as equal members of the community.[73] Franz Laub states that this feature of the codes "testifies to an extraordinary community-building dynamic that has no equal in the religious history of antiquity" (*zeugt von einer außergewöhnlichen gemeinschaftsbildenden*

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[70] So Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 111–16; MacDonald, "Slavery"; MacDonald, "Children," 81; Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Reading the New Testament Household Codes in Light of New Research on Children and Childhood in the Roman World," *SR* 41.3 (2012): 376–87, esp. 381. For views on the sexual use of slaves, see Jos. *Ag. Ap.* 2.199, 215; Sen. Y. *Ep.* 47.7; Mus. Ruf. 12.31–48; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 15.5. The church fathers frequently assert that slaves are not to obey their masters if their masters commanded them to do something wrong. See Jerome *Comm. Eph.* 6:5–8; Basil *Ask. LR* 11 [31:948.23–34]; Chrys. *Hom. 1 Cor.* 19 [61:157.10–18].

[71] For husband-wife, see Sen. Y. *Ben.* 2.18.1–2; Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.12 [1254B]; 1.5.8 [1260A]; Ps.-Charondas 62.30–36. For wife-husband, see Jos. *Ag. Ap.* 2.201; Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 2.25.4. For father-child, see Sen. Y. *Ben.* 2.18.1–2. For slave-master see Philo *Decalogue* 167. For subject-ruler, see Philo *Decalogue* 167, Ps.-Charondas 61.16–22. Other texts that discuss the proper conduct of slaves include Ps.-Zaleucus 228.13–14; SIG 985.

[72] So Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik*, 568–69; Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists," 406; Hays, *Moral Vision*, 64; Dunn, *Paul*, 700–701; Whang, "Cohabitation or Conflict," 96–97; Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 142; Wold, "Family Ethics," 191–92; Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary Behind the Church's Conservative Icon* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 46–47; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:654–56; MacDonald, "Beyond Identification," 72; Roitto, *Behaving*, 205; Winger, *Ephesians*, 663.

[73] So Yoder, *Politics*, 174; Barth, *Ephesians*, 757; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 419–20, 425–26; Witherington, *Women*, 160; Woyke, *Haustafeln*, 58; Gombis, "Radically New," 325, 329; Sumney, *Colossians*, 240, 247; Keown, "Paul's Vision," 51, 57; Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 177–79.

Dynamik, die in der Religionsgeschichte der Antike ihresgleichen nicht hat). Laub is particularly struck by the fact that the slave "appears as an equal member of the community alongside all others" (*als gleichwertiges Gemeindemitglied neben allen anderen erscheint*).[74] According to Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, the direct address indicates a "sharp rejection" (*scharfe Absage*) of the surrounding culture's "fundamental undervaluation" (*prinzipiellen Unterbewertung*) of women, children, and slaves.[75] Harrill and Jenifer A. Glancy, however, downplay the significance of the direct address to slaves, noting that agricultural handbooks include instructions to the *vilicus* (i.e. the elite slave who manages the master's estate).[76]

2.3.5. The Exhortation to Masters

Scholars debate the meaning and significance of the command to grant slaves τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα (Col 4:1). Some scholars contrast this advice with Aristotle's claim that the requirements of justice do not operate between master and slave, because the slave is property.[77] Others emphasize that exhortations to treat slaves well are found throughout the extant literature.[78] Concerning the specific behaviors envisioned in Col 4:1, MacDonald tentatively suggests that just and fair treatment includes eventual manumission "as a reward for faithful

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[74] Laub, "Sozialgeschichtlicher Hintergrund," 261, 268–70. So also Laub, *Begegnung*, 90–96.

[75] Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Mann und Frau im Urchristentum*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 12 (Köln: Westdeutscher, 1954), 29–30. On the natural inferiority of slaves, see Arist. *Pol.* 1.2.11–15 [1254B–1255A]; Jos. *Ant.* 4.219.

[76] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 86; Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery as Moral Problem: In the Early Church and Today*, Facets (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 54–55. See also Barclay, "Ordinary," 244. For a direct address to the *vilicus* in an agricultural handbook, see for example Cato E. *Agr*. 9.1; 143.1. Other agricultural handbooks include Xen. *Oec.*; Arist. [*Oec.*]; Varro *Rust.*; Colum. *Rust.*

[77] So Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:656. See Arist. *Eth. nic.* 5.6.8–9 [1134B].

[78] See Sections 4.3.1 and 5.3 below.

service."[79] On the other hand, Glancy argues that "from the perspective of wider Greco-Roman culture," beating slaves and using them sexually fall "easily within the parameters of 'just and fair' behavior."[80] A similar argument is made by Harrill.[81] Margaret Davies argues that Col 4:1 would do "little more" than possibly "save a slave from semi-starvation and cruel beatings."[82]

However, a number of scholars argue that τὴν ἰσότητα means equality, and thus Col 4:1 is more than merely a conventional command to treat slaves fairly.[83] Charles Hodge, a nineteenth-century American NT scholar and vocal critic of abolitionism, argued that Col 4:1 requires masters to grant their slaves "equality." Hodge did not interpret this to mean that masters must free their slaves, but he did believe the command prohibited masters from certain

[79] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 164. For manumission as a just (δίκαιον) reward, see esp. Arist. [*Oec.*] 1.6.6 [1344B.15–16], but note also the critique in Philod. *Prop.* Col. 10.10–14.

[80] Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 143–44; Glancy, *Moral Problem*, 56.

[81] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 105–7. On the just punishment of slaves, see Sir 33:25–30; 42:1–5; Plato *Leg.* 777D–E (note use of ἄδικος); Cato E. *Agr.* 5.1.

[82] Margaret Davies, "Work and Slavery in the New Testament: Impoverishments of Traditions," in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. J. W. Rogerson, M. Daniel Carroll R., and Margaret Davies, JSOTSup 207 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995), 343–44.

[83] Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Robert Carter and Brothers, 1856; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 368–69; Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians and to Philemon*, trans. William P. Dickson and John C. Moore (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 377–78; Standhartinger, *Studien*, 252–54; Standhartinger, "Origin," 128–29; Laura L. Sanders, "Equality and a Request for the Manumission of Onesimus," *ResQ* 46.2 (2004): 109–14, esp. 112–13; Sumney, *Colossians*, 252–54; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:657. See also Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 182; Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 366–67. The term is glossed as "equality" without any further discussion in Petros Vassiliadis, "Equality and Justice in Classical Antiquity and in Paul: The Social Implications of the Pauline Collection," *SVTQ* 36.1–2 (1992): 51–59, esp. 55; Adam Copenhaver, *Reconstructing the Historical Background of Paul's Rhetoric in the Letter to the Colossians*, LNTS 585 (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 132.

behaviors, including withholding education from the slave or breaking up slave families.[84] More recently, Standhartinger has asserted that the use of ἰσότης is "an interpretive key to reading the code."[85] Following Standhartinger, Sumney describes the command as "one of the clearest places where this table of instructions intentionally signals opposition to the system it seems to support." While Sumney acknowledges that "treating slaves as equals would be impossible in the legal and cultural system of the first century," he insists that "this is precisely what Colossians demands from owners." Thus Col 4:1 "subverts the system that the previous verses seem to support" and "invalidates the relationship of owner and slave."[86] Laura L. Sanders suggests that the command even hints at manumission.[87]

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[84] Hodge writes: "Paul requires for slaves not only what is strictly just, but τὴν ἰσότητα. What is that? Literally, it is *equality*. This is not only its signification, but its meaning. Slaves are to be treated by their masters on the principles of equality. Not that they are to be equal with their masters in authority, or station, or circumstances; but they are to be treated as having, as men, as husbands, and as parents, equal rights with their masters. It is just as great a sin to deprive a slave of the just recompense for his labour, or to keep him in ignorance, or to take from him his wife or child, as it is to act thus towards a free man. This is the equality which the law of God demands" [*Ephesians*, 368–69]. Hodge objected to the notion that slaves belong to "an inferior race," and he did not believe that slavery should be "cherished and perpetuated" [*Ephesians*, 362]. Furthermore, Hodge suggested that if the instructions in the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* were followed, "first the evils of slavery, and then slavery itself, would pass away as naturally and as healthfully as children cease to be minors" [*Ephesians*, 370; cf. 362–63]. Nevertheless, Hodge insisted that owning slaves was not a sin, and he vigorously opposed the "pernicious influence" of the abolitionists. He even wrote a treatise in support of the Fugitive Slave Act, a law which he insisted "is not in conflict with the law of God" ["The Fugitive Slave Law," in *Cotton Is King and Pro-Slavery Arguments* (Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860), 809–40, esp. 812–15; cf. Charles Hodge, "The Bible Argument on Slavery," in *Cotton Is King and Pro-Slavery Arguments* (Augusta, GA: Pritchard, Abbott & Loomis, 1860), 841–77]. On the view that Col 4:1 is incompatible with the practice of splitting up slave families, see also John H. Caldwell, *Slavery and Southern Methodism: Two Sermons Preached in the Methodist Church in Newman, Georgia* (Printed for the Author, 1865), 24–25.

[85] Standhartinger, "Origin," 129.

[86] Sumney, *Colossians*, 253–54. See also Standhartinger, *Studien*, 274–76; Standhartinger, "Origin," 127–30.

[87] Sanders, "Equality," 112–13.

Nevertheless, the large majority of scholars insist that ἰσότης in Col 4:1 means fairness and not equality.[88] Others take a mediating view. Hering, for example, observes in a footnote that the term may have "intimated some sort of equality," but elsewhere he asserts that Philo's view of the slave as "ontologically *equal*" to the master goes "much further" than anything in the *Haustafel*.[89] G. K. Beale prefers the translation "equality" to "fairness," but argues that τὴν ἰσότητα refers to equality among slaves, not equality between master and slave. Thus, according to Beale, the command merely prohibits the "preferential treatment" of one slave over another.[90]

Scholars also debate the meaning of the command, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς (Eph 6:9). According to Richard Bauckham, "This can only mean: to render service to them, to serve them as slaves, as they do you."[91] Others are not as decisive, but nevertheless consider it a strong

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[88] BDAG 481; LSJ 840; *MM* 307; Gustav Stählin, "ἴσος, ἰσότης, ἰσότιμος" *TDNT* 3:343–55, esp. 355; GE 989; H. C. G. Moule, *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges: The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 134; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, KEK 9 (Gõttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 159–60; Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 230; Eduard Schweizer, *Der Brief an die Kolosser*, EKKNT (Zürich: Benziger, 1976), 168–69; Joachim Gnilka, *Der Kolosserbrief*, HThKNT 10.1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 224–25; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC 44 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 232; Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik*, 567–71; Strecker, "Haustafeln," 371; Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists," 406–7; Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 450–51; Dunn, *Colossians*, 259–60; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 159; Leppä, *Making of Colossians*, 189; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 287; Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 85–117, esp. 90, 105–109; MacDonald, "Slavery," 106; Moo, *Letters*, 316–17. See also Davies, "Work," 343–44.

[89] Hering, *Haustafeln*, 102–3, 240–42, 246. Hering cites Philo's words in *Spec. Laws* 2.69, 83; 3.137; *Virtues* 173. Philo's words in *Spec. Laws* 2.69 are also contrasted with the Colossian *Haustafel* in Barclay, "Ordinary," 253–54.

[90] G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019), 328. So also Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *Woman's Place*, 112; Paul Foster, *Colossians*, BNTC (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 395–96. Peter Arzt-Grabner appears to hold a similar interpretation ["Everyday Life in a Roman Town Like Colossae: The Papyrological Evidence," in *The First Urban Churches 5: Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea*, ed. James R. Harrison and L. L. Welborn, WGRWSup 16 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 187–238, esp. 224–25].

[91] Bauckham, *God*, 126. So also Belz, "Proper," 240.

possibility that the verse "means what it says."[92] Most scholars, however, reject such an interpretation of the command.[93]

Furthermore, scholars debate the meaning of the subsequent phrase, ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν (Eph 6:9). According to Stephen E. Fowl, "Abandoning of threats must entail abandoning of punishment."[94] Since the threat of violence was an essential aspect of the master's control over his slaves, Frank Thielman concludes that Eph 6:9 cuts "the thread that held the institution of slavery together."[95] Harold W. Hoehner, however, argues that the command was not intended to prohibit all threats, but only "idle threats" which "were made merely to engender fear."[96] Similarly, Harrill asserts that Eph 6:9a prohibits "angry speech" but contains nothing which people in the first century did not "already know, practice, and take for granted as obviously right."[97]

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[92] Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 206, cf. 187, 220. So also Stanley N. Helton, "Ephesians 5:21: A Longer Translation Note," *ResQ* 48.1 (2006): 33–41, esp. 39; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:680; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 408–9; Keown, "Paul's Vision," 58; Timothy A. Brookins, "(Dis)Correspondence of Paul and Seneca on Slavery," in *Paul and Seneca in Dialogue*, ed. Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones, APhR 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 179–207, esp. 195.

[93] Kenneth W. Dupar, *A Study in New Testament Haustafeln* (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1971), 93; Joachim Gnilka, *Der Epheserbrief*, HThKNT 10.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1982), 302; Marlis Gielen, *Tradition und Theologie neutestamentlicher Haustafelethik: Ein Beitrag zur Frage einer christlichen Auseinandersetzung mit gesellschaftlichen Normen*, BBB 75 (Frankfurt: Anton Hain, 1990), 306–7; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 423; Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* (New York: UBS, 1993), 155; Best, *Ephesians*, 580; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 454; Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 281; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 813; Gombis, "Radically New," 329–30; Fowl, *Ephesians*, 196; Winger, *Ephesians*, 669.

[94] Fowl, *Ephesians*, 197.

[95] Thielman, *Ephesians*, 409–10.

[96] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 814. See also Best, *Ephesians*, 581; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 454; Martinsen, "New Life," 60.

[97] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 90.

Throughout both *Haustafeln*, the behavior of the various household members is oriented with respect to "the Lord."[98] Some scholars see this as a merely superficial Christianization that only serves to provide theological sanction for cultural norms.[99] As Harrill puts it, "The word of Aristotle thus becomes the word of the Lord."[100] Others argue that the references to "the Lord" throughout the *Haustafeln* constitute a more substantial challenge to conventional beliefs and practices. In particular, scholars often suggest that the final reference to a higher κύριος (Col 4:1b; Eph 6:9b) relativizes the authority of the master.[101] Harrill, however, objects that this "pointed warning" is merely part of an attempt "to put local householders in their place under a larger hierarchy of church leaders."[102]

2.4. The Occasion and Purpose of the Haustafeln

Scholars have offered a variety of explanations for the emergence of the *Haustafel*. These explanations are not necessarily contradictory, and many scholars defend more than one.

2.4.1. The Unexpected Delay of the Parousia

Citing 1 Cor 7:29–31, Dibelius argues that the imminent eschatology of Jesus and the apostles left later Christians unprepared to provide practical guidance for the ongoing realities of daily life. These Christians thus turned to the resources that were available to them in the surrounding culture and adopted the *Haustafel*.[103] Other scholars, however, object that the

[98] See Col 3:18, 20, 23, 24, 4:1; Eph 5:22; 6:1, 4, 7, 8, 9.

[99] So Martinsen, "New Life," 59; Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 113.

[100] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 113.

[101] So Barth, *Ephesians*, 756; Hays, *Moral Vision*, 65; Dunn, *Paul*, 700–701; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 159; Bauckham, *God*, 125; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:656.

[102] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 97, 115.

[103] Dibelius, *Kolosser*, 47–50. See also Strecker, "Haustafeln," 359.

concerns for order and hierarchy found in the *Haustafeln* are already present in the undisputed letters of Paul.[104]

2.4.2. The Role of the Household in the Early Church

Many scholars cite the critical role of the household in the early Christian movement. As Laub explains, the οἶκος "represented something of an infrastructure" (*etwas wie eine Infrastruktur … darstellte*) for the church.[105] Rengstorf thus attributes the emergence of the *Haustafeln* to an early Christian conviction that "only healthy 'houses' secure the survival of the communities of Jesus" (*nur gesunde "Häuser" den Bestand der Gemeinde Jesu sichern*).[106]

2.4.3. Agitations or Confusions Concerning Christian Equality

Many scholars argue that the *Haustafeln* were intended to suppress or prevent a drive for equality among Christian women and slaves.[107] In his study on the Colossian *Haustafel*, Crouch proposes that Christian slaves were no longer content to behave as equals in worship and had begun to assert their "equality in society." This posed a "threat to the social order" which was "the most crucial problem" facing the authors of the code.[108] Schüssler Fiorenza likewise

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[104] So Rengstorf, *Mann und Frau*, 23; Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln," 96–97. See Section 2.5.2 below.

[105] Laub, "Sozialgeschichtlicher Hintergrund," 261. See also Laub, *Begegnung*, 89; Nash, "Heuristic Haustafeln," 38–39; Witherington, *Women*, 149; Tanzer, "Ephesians," 328–29; John M. G. Barclay, "The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 66–80, esp. 75–77; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 251; Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 193.

[106] Rengstorf, *Mann und Frau*, 32.

[107] Dibelius, *Kolosser*, 47–50; Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, 120–45, 150–51; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 236; Annie Tinsley, *A Postcolonial African American Re-Reading of Colossians: Identity, Reception, and Interpretation under the Gaze of Empire* (New York: Macmillan, 2013), 171.

[108] Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, 150–51.

describes the *Haustafeln* as an attempt to restrain Christians who were actively seeking to achieve social equality. Contrary to Crouch, however, Schüssler Fiorenza insists that the egalitarianism which the *Haustafeln* sought to suppress was the original posture of the church, not the product of "later enthusiastic excess." She thus describes the *Haustafeln* as an attempt "to change the equality in Christ between women and men, slaves and free, into a relationship of subordination in the household."[109]

Other scholars, however, deny that the *Haustafeln* are responding to internal agitations for equality. Jean-Noël Aletti argues that the content of the exhortation in Col 3:22–25 gives no indication that the slaves were chafing against the authority of their masters. Aletti concludes that the higher status of the masters was "not disputed" (*pas contesté*).[110] Witherington likewise finds "no evidence" that the *Haustafeln* were intended "to stifle a feminist or slave revolution."[111] Furthermore, as MacDonald observes, the author of Colossians "happily quotes" a version of the very confession that is supposed to have sparked the drive for equality (Col 3:11; cf. Gal 3:28).[112] Finally, as Schrage and others note, the instructions to children can hardly be attributed to their "emancipatory longings" (*emanzipatorische Gelüste*).[113]

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[109] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 236. Schüssler Fiorenza is citing Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, 141.

[110] Jean-Noël Aletti, *Saint Paul Épitre aux Colossiens: Introduction, traduction et commentaire*, EBib 20 (Paris: Gabalda, 1993), 254–55.

[111] Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:649. So also Lincoln, "Household Code," 97.

[112] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 163. So also Motyer, "Relationship," 37; Lincoln, "Household Code," 98.

[113] Schrage, "Zur Ethik," 5–6. So also Schweizer, "Weltlichkeit," 405; O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 219; Nash, "Heuristic Haustafeln," 45; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:645–46; Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 193. Nevertheless, Schrage elsewhere states that in the exhortations to the subordinate members, the author's "primary purpose is obviously to prevent confusing Christian freedom with social freedom" [*Ethics*, 256].

Nevertheless, many scholars conclude that even if Christian women and slaves were not actively agitating for social equality, the *Haustafeln* were still intended, at least in part, to prevent such agitations. Citing Paul's instructions to slaves in 1 Cor 7:20–22, Dibelius argues that "the misunderstanding of the message of freedom as a call to social revolution" (*die mißverständliche Auffassung der Freiheitsbotschaft als eines Aufrufs zur sozialen Revolution*) was a constant danger for the Christian communities.[114] Given the fact that the address to slaves comprises almost half of the Colossian *Haustafel*, Ingrid Maisch argues that the relationship between master and slave "was perceived as particularly problematic" (*als besonders problematisch empfunden wurde*).[115] Sumney likewise suggests that the word to slaves is the longest because "the incongruity between their place in the world and their identity in Christ is the most acute."[116]

Some scholars argue more specifically that the disproportionate emphasis on the behavior of slaves is connected to the Onesimus/Philemon incident.[117] Muddiman suggests that Onesimus would have delivered the epistle and read it aloud to the congregation (see Col 4:9). According to Muddiman, Onesimus' reading of Col 3:22–25 would have been seen as "an act of public contrition" for wronging Philemon. Furthermore, Col 3:22–25 would provide "reassurance" to

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[114] Dibelius, *Kolosser*, 47–50.

[115] Ingrid Maisch, *Der Brief an die Gemeinde in Kolossä*, ThKNT 12 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 257.

[116] Sumney, *Colossians*, 252. So also Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik*, 569; Strecker, "Haustafeln," 369; Petr Pokorný, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Epheser*, THKNT (Leipzig: EVA, 1992), 235; Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 193. See also Lars Hartman, "Code and Context: A Few Reflections on the Parenesis of Col 3:6–4:1," in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 237–47, esp. 243; Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 159.

[117] Moo, *Letters*, 298.

other masters that the appeal to Philemon was "exceptional" and not a call for general manumission. Muddiman concludes that this was Paul's "chief reason" for including the *Haustafel*.[118] A similar proposal is offered by Munro, who views the Colossian *Haustafel* as a later addition to the epistle (see Section 2.1 above). Munro suggests that the author of the Colossian *Haustafel* sought to counter "the strong impression of egalitarianism" which would have been suggested by the reading of Colossians with Philemon in an early collection of Paul's letters (see esp. Col 3:11 and Phlm 16).[119]

2.4.4. External Accusations of Disrupting the Social Order

Scholars often argue that the *Haustafeln* were intended, at least in part, "to maintain an honourable reputation in the eyes of the surrounding society."[120] In particular, many propose that the *Haustafeln* were intended to protect the community from accusations of disrupting the social order by encouraging the insubordination of women and slaves.[121] Balch emphasizes the

[118] Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 252–53.

[119] Munro, "Col 3:18–4:1," 441–43.

[120] Beattie, *Women*, 75. So also Wright, *Paul*, 2.1375. Many suggest that "social respectability" was desired, not merely to shield the community from persecution, but also to facilitate evangelism [Dunn, *Colossians*, 245; so also Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, SNTSMS 60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 99–102; Westfall, *Paul*, 162–63].

[121] Balch, *Wives*, 96–97, 119; Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 446; D'Angelo, "Colossians," 321; Sharon H. Ringe, "The New Testament and the Ethics of Cultural Compromise: *Compromiso* with the God of Life or Compromise with the Ideology of Power," in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. J. W. Rogerson, M. Daniel Carroll R., and Margaret Davies, JSOTSup 207 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995), 232–47, esp. 243–44; Dunn, *Colossians*, 251; Standhartinger, "Origin," 123–27; Bevere, *Sharing*, 250; Maier, "A Sly Civility," 346; Sumney, *Colossians*, 238. On the *Haustafel* in 1 Peter, see Abraham J. Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," in *ANRW* 26.1:380–411, esp. 307–312.

problems which would have been caused by the refusal of Christian wives, children, and slaves to worship the gods of the non-Christian *paterfamilias*.[122]

In defense of this reconstruction, some argue that an apologetic concern can be detected in Col 4:5–6.[123] Moreover, scholars cite a variety of sources in which Christians, Jews, Epicureans, or participants in mystery religions are accused of being anti-social or disrupting hierarchies.[124] Here many appeal to the connection which Balch and others emphasize between the *topos* on household management and political philosophy (see Section 2.2.1 above). As Andrew T. Lincoln explains, "Proper household management was regarded as a matter of crucial social and political concern" and thus "any upsetting of the household's traditional hierarchical order could be considered a potential threat to the order of society."[125] Scholars often note that Josephus discusses proper household relationships while defending Judaism from pagan critics.[126] Standhartinger also cites as "an example of a law-code that intends to safeguard a community" a certain inscription (SIG 985) which "apparently gives information about social regulations in a private mystery temple."[127]

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[122] Balch, *Wives*, 96–97, 119; Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists," 395. See also MacDonald, "Reading," 383. On the expectation that the subordinate members of the household follow the religion of the *paterfamilias*, see Section 7.3 below.

[123] MacDonald, "Rereading," 242; Lincoln, "Household Code," 110–11.

[124] See Origen, *Cels.* 3.55; Tac. *Hist.* 5.5; Epict. *Diatr*. 3.7.20; Diod. Sic. 1.27.2; Dio Cass. 50.25.2–4; 50.28.3.

[125] Lincoln, "Household Code," 101.

[126] Lincoln, "Household Code," 101; Margaret Y. MacDonald, "The Politics of Identity in Ephesians," *JSNT* 26.4 (2004): 419–44, esp. 441. See Jos. *Ag. Ap.* 199–215.

[127] Standhartinger, "Origin," 126–27. See also Standhartinger, *Studien*, 265–68. However, the identification of this inscription with a mystery religion is disputed. On the view that the inscription is associated with a household cult and that the rules contained in the inscription are simply intended to preserve "the existence and prosperity of the oikos," see Stanley K. Stowers, "A Cult from Philadelphia: Oikos Religion or Cultic Association?," in *The Early Church in Its*

Nevertheless, others have challenged the notion that the *Haustafeln* were introduced to protect the reputation of the community. While an apologetic concern is explicit in the Petrine *Haustafel* (1 Pet 2:15; 3:1–2; cf. Tit 2:5; 1 Tim 5:14), scholars find little evidence of such a concern in Colossians or Ephesians.[128] Furthermore, Daniel K. Darko argues that the early Christians never had a "social structure" that differed from the one presented in the *Haustafeln* and accepted by surrounding society. According to Darko, the early Christians had no conception of a non-patriarchal or non-hierarchical household.[129] Finally, John H. Elliott argues that "social conformity and assimilation" are precisely what the Petrine *Haustafel* is "intended to discourage" (see esp. 1 Peter 1:14–16; 2:11; 4:2–5).[130] Scholars working on the Ephesian *Haustafel* have made similar arguments from Eph 4:17.[131]

2.4.5. The Particular Agendas of the Epistles

Some scholars argue that the Colossian *Haustafel* is "integral to the message of the letter."[132] One suggestion is that the *Haustafel* is intended to promote the unity discussed in Col

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Context: Essays in Honor of Everett Ferguson, ed. Abraham J. Malherbe, Frederick W. Norris, and James W. Thompson (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 287–301, esp. 295. On the view that the inscription is associated with a mystery religion, see S. C. Barton and G. H. R. Horsley, "A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament Churches," *JAC* 24 (1981): 7–41. On the significance of the sexual regulations in the inscription for the interpretation of the *Haustafeln*, see MacDonald, "Slavery," 98–100.

[128] On Colossians, see Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 358–59. On Ephesians, see Gombis, "Radically New," 318; Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 319; Darko, *No Longer*, 75; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 368; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:662; Fowl, *Ephesians*, 180; Keown, "Paul's Vision," 49.

[129] Darko, *No Longer*, 75–81.

[130] John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 218.

[131] So Keown, "Paul's Vision," 49; Gombis, "Radically New," 318.

[132] MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 160. So also Lincoln, "Household Code," 102.

3:11–14.[133] Another is that the "practical worldliness" of the *Haustafel* is intended to counter the asceticism of the Colossian heresy (see esp. Col 2:20–23).[134] The most common suggestion, however, connects Christ's lordship over the household to his lordship over all things (see esp. Col 1:15–20).[135] Harry O. Maier compares the use of family imagery in imperial propaganda to the Colossian *Haustafel*, where "well-governed household relations are similarly made to reflect the divine governance of the rule and peace of Christ celebrated in 3.15."[136] Furthermore, John M. G. Barclay and others suggest that the emphasis on the lordship of Christ explains the disproportionate amount of space devoted in the *Haustafel* to the behavior of slaves. As Barclay observes, "What is said here of slaves is easily applied by extension to all the other categories mentioned" (see Col 4:7; Rom 12:11; 1 Cor 7:22; etc.).[137] Thus, according to Johannes Woyke, slaves stand in the Colossian *Haustafel* "as paradigms of Christians" (*als Paradigmen der Christen*).[138] Nash likewise argues that "the primary model for personal identity was that of the servant." In support of this reading, Nash notes the heavy use of servant language (Col 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7, 12) and the echoes of 3:17 and 1:12 in 3:23 and 3:24, respectively.[139]

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[133] Bevere, *Sharing*, 246–49.

[134] Hartman, "Code and Context," 243. So also O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 219; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 359; Lincoln, "Household Code," 107–8. See also Clayton N. Jefford, "Household Codes and Conflict in the Early Church," *StPatr* 31 (1997): 121–27, esp. 122.

[135] So Schrage, "Zur Ethik," 252; Lincoln, "Household Code," 105–6; Bevere, *Sharing*, 248; Maier, "A Sly Civility," 345–47; Henderson, "Taking Liberties," 425–26; Moo, *Letters*, 298; Barclay, "Ordinary," 245–47.

[136] Maier, "A Sly Civility," 345–47.

[137] Barclay, "Ordinary," 246. So also Lincoln, "Household Code," 105–6.

[138] Woyke, *Haustafeln*, 58–59. See also Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 198.

[139] Nash, "Heuristic *Haustafeln*," 45–46.

However, others see the *Haustafel* as an abrupt insertion which is not well integrated into the epistle.[140] Furthermore, some argue that the *Haustafel* directly contradicts the message of equality proclaimed in Col 3:11. Annie Tinsley, for example, suggests that the inclusion of the *Haustafel* is a compromise "to pacify those in the community who are not ready or unable to leave their old lives behind." By including the *Haustafel*, the author communicates that the "equality" spoken of in 3:11 "must not affect the structure of the household."[141]

A similar debate is found in the literature on Ephesians. Some scholars find significant discontinuity between the *Haustafel* and the rest of the epistle. Noting that the hierarchy of the code appears to "clash fundamentally" with the "total equality" advocated throughout the epistle, Sarah J. Tanzer goes so far as to conclude that the *Haustafel* is a later addition to the epistle.[142] Other scholars emphasize continuity between the *Haustafel* and the rest of the epistle. Timothy G. Gombis describes the code as "a manifesto for the New Humanity" (see Eph 2:15) which provides "a concrete model" for how to live as members of "the household of God" (see Eph 2:19).[143]

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[140] So Belz, "Rhetoric," 47–49; Standhartinger, "Origin," 129–30.

[141] Tinsley, *Postcolonial*, 164, 171. Standhartinger, on the other hand, argues that the unresolved contradiction created by "the juxtaposition of 3.11 and 3.18–4.1" is one of the clues which the authors have left to indicate that the *Haustafel* is to be read "against the grain" ["Origin," 129–30; so also Standhartinger, *Studien*, 275; see Section 2.3 above].

[142] Tanzer, "Ephesians," 340–42.

[143] Gombis, "Radically New," 319–22. So also Belz, "Rhetoric," 49–53, 242. Citing the connection between household management and political philosophy, as well as the use of household imagery in political propaganda, both Gombis and MacDonald portray the *Haustafel* as presenting a vision of "the new creation *politeia*" [Gombis, "Radically New," 320–22; so also MacDonald, "Politics," 439–41].

2.5. The Relationship of the Haustafeln to Paul

The authorship of Colossians and Ephesians is disputed, but most scholars working on the *Haustafeln* believe these epistles were written after Paul's death.[144] Nevertheless, these scholars remain divided in their assessment of the relationship between the *Haustafeln* and Paul. Some scholars emphasize discontinuity, while others emphasize continuity.

2.5.1. Discontinuity with Paul

Many scholars argue that the *Haustafeln* represent a significant departure from Pauline egalitarianism.[145] Schüssler Fiorenza describes the *Haustafeln* as a rejection of "the alternative Christian vision of Gal 3:38 [*sic*]" in favor of "the established political-social status quo of inequality."[146] In a popular-level book entitled, *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary Behind the Church's Conservative Icon*, Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan go so far as to declare that the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* "are not just post-Pauline; they are anti-Pauline."[147]

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[144] For a defense of the Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians, see Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 1–19; Gregory S. MaGee, *Portrait of an Apostle: A Case for Paul's Authorship of Colossians and Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013); Wright, *Paul*, 1:56–61.

[145] So John E. Stambaugh, David L. Balch, and Wayne A. Meeks, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 55; Clarice J. Martin, "The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: 'Free Slaves' and 'Subordinate Women,'" in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 206–31, esp. 211–13; D'Angelo, "Colossians," 314–15, 322–23; Ringe, "New Testament," 244; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 279, 254. See also David G. Horrell, "From Ἀδελφοί to Οἶκος Θεοῦ: Social Transformation in Pauline Christianity," *JBL* 120.2 (2001): 293–311, esp. 309–11.

[146] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 279, 254. See also Peter Lampe, "The Language of Equality in Early Christian House Churches: A Constructivist Approach," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 73–83, esp. 83.

[147] Borg and Crossan, *First Paul*, 46.

In addition to Gal 3:28, scholars also point to 1 Cor 7. Gillian Beattie argues that Paul's "decidedly ambivalent attitude to marriage" in 1 Cor 7:1–9 does not align with the "exalted view of marriage" presented in the Ephesian *Haustafel*.[148] Beattie also describes the mutual submission of Eph 5:21 as merely the "last echo" of the "labored reciprocity" found in 1 Cor 7:3–5.[149] Best argues that passages such as 1 Cor 7:13–16 display "a much greater realism" than the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln*, both of which demonstrate "a serious lack of imagination as to the real world."[150] Concerning slavery, Weidinger describes the Colossian *Haustafel* as "considerably weaker" (*bedeutend schwächer*) and a "step backwards" (*Rückschritt*) from 1 Cor 7:22.[151]

Finally, many scholars argue that the *Haustafeln* betray a more conservative approach to slavery than the one attested in Philemon. Barclay suggests that in Philemon, Paul "struggled" with slavery, "recognising more or less consciously the tension between the realities of slavery and the demands of brotherhood." In the *Haustafeln*, however, Barclay asserts that such a struggle is absent.[152] Barth and Blanke likewise argue that the epistle to Philemon offers "glimpses at a possible social change," while the *Haustafeln* do not.[153]

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[148] Beattie, *Women*, 82. See also MacDonald, "Rereading," 243; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 338; Jennifer G. Bird, "The Letter to the Ephesians," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 265–80, esp. 275–276.

[149] Beattie, *Women*, 77.

[150] Best, *Ephesians*, 525–26.

[151] Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln*, 52–53.

[152] Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 184–86.

[153] Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 162. See also Laub, *Begegnung*, 96–98.

Naturally, this purported tension between the *Haustafeln* and "the first Paul" has led to a negative assessment of the theological value of the codes. Sharon H. Ringe suggests that while the *Haustafeln* may have guaranteed the survival of Christianity (see Section 2.4.4 above), they threatened the survival of the gospel.[154] D'Angelo does not believe that the church should whitewash its past by excising these texts from the canon, but she asserts, "The codes should be read liturgically or cited as scripture *only* to be challenged."[155]

2.5.2. Continuity with Paul

Many scholars emphasize the continuity between the *Haustafeln* and the undisputed Paulines. First, some argue that the concerns for order and hierarchy found in the *Haustafeln* are also found in 1 Corinthians (esp. 7:20–24; 11:2–16; 14:34–36).[156] Thus, far from being "a radical departure" from Paul, the *Haustafeln* simply "codify succinctly many of Paul's earlier instructions."[157]

Second, some scholars maintain that the sentiments expressed in Gal 3:28 are compatible with the hierarchy found in the *Haustafeln*. Hoehner argues that Gal 3:28 "in no way contradicts the household codes," for while Gal 3:28 asserts the fundamental equality of all people, it does not address "lines of authority" in specific relationships. Thus Gal 3:28 speaks of male/female

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[154] Ringe, "New Testament," 244.

[155] D'Angelo, "Colossians," 323. Emphasis hers.

[156] So Rengstorf, *Mann und Frau*, 23; Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, 120–45, 150–51.

[157] Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 194. While MacDonald also does not find a sharp discontinuity between the norms enshrined in the *Haustafeln* and the teachings of Paul, she nevertheless believes that the "rule-like" nature of the codes indicates that "the ethical position of the Pauline movement is becoming more conservative" [*Pauline Churches*, 104–5; see also Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln," 91–95; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 166].

instead of husband/wife and free/slave instead of master/slave.[158] Furthermore, several scholars cite 1 Cor 7 as evidence that the theology expressed in Gal 3:28 was not considered to be in tension with the established hierarchies of the household.[159] Lührmann, for example, asserts that in 1 Cor 7:19–22, Paul uses the theology of Gal 3:28 to reach conclusions which are "surprisingly conservative" (*erstaunlich konservativ*).[160] Finally, scholars argue that since a version of the declaration found in Gal 3:28 is repeated "within spitting distance" of the *Haustafel* (Col 3:11), this declaration was not understood as incompatible with the hierarchy outlined in the code.[161]

Third, some scholars argue that the *Haustafeln* do reflect a remarkable degree of social equality. Since wives, children, and slaves are addressed as members of the community, Rengstorf asserts that the *Haustafeln* contain the message of Gal 3:28 "in a new form" (*in neuer Form*). Rengstorf thus objects to the notion that the *Haustafeln* represent a fall from "the full height of the gospel" (*der vollen Höhe des Evangeliums*).[162] Laub likewise argues that the *Haustafeln* demonstrate that the church has remained faithful "in a remarkable way" (*in beachtlicher Weise*) to her mission of transcending social divisions and integrating people into one body regardless of gender, ethnicity, or class.[163] Furthermore, Sanders and Justin J. Meggitt

[158] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 726–27.

[159] So Balch, *Wives*, 107; Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln," 92–93; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 418; Lincoln, "Household Code," 97.

[160] Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln," 92–93.

[161] Motyer, "Relationship," 37.

[162] Rengstorf, *Mann und Frau*, 29–30, 42.

[163] Laub, "Sozialgeschichtlicher Hintergrund," 261, 271. So also Laub, *Begegnung*, 90–96.

argue that Col 4:1, which suggests some degree of equality (ἰσότης) between master and slave, echoes the view of slavery expressed in Philemon.[164]

As noted above in Section 2.3, those scholars who emphasize the countercultural nature of the *Haustafeln* are sometimes accused of distorting the evidence in order to establish the ethical superiority of the NT. Similar apologetic motives have been attributed to those scholars who seek to distance Paul from the *Haustafeln*. N. T. Wright even suggests that modern embarrassment over the *Haustafeln* is a leading factor in the persistent rejection of the Pauline authorship of Colossians and Ephesians.[165]

2.6. Conclusion

In a 1989 survey of scholarship on the Colossian and Ephesians *Haustafeln*, Stephen Motyer remarked, "It is hard to imagine a broader spread of opinion."[166] In the thirty years that have elapsed since Motyer's essay, the situation is not much improved.[167] Despite over a century of critical analysis, scholars still offer radically different accounts of the origin, character, and intention of the *Haustafeln*. Nevertheless, there is one feature of the *Haustafeln* which has surprisingly been overlooked by scholars. As explained in Chapter 1, both *Haustafeln* address masters with language which, if pressed literally, threatens to erase any distinction between master and slave. Despite the intense scrutiny that the *Haustafeln* have received in modern scholarship, no study has attempted to explain this peculiar feature of the codes.

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[164] So Sanders, "Equality," 112–13; Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 182. See also Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 339.

[165] Wright, *Paul*, 1.58. See also Meeks, "Haustafeln," 248.

[166] Motyer, "Relationship," 39.

[167] The ongoing lack of consensus is noted in Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 229.

Many studies completely ignore the possibility that Col 4:1 would have been heard as a command to grant slaves equality.[168] This omission is particularly striking in those studies which explicitly claim that the Colossian *Haustafel* was intended to suppress equality between master and slave. For example, as discussed above in Section 2.4.3, Crouch argues at length that the *Haustafel* was incorporated into Colossians to rein in those slaves who were seeking "equality" with their Christian masters. However, Crouch never considers the possibility that a command to grant slaves ἰσότης might undermine such an agenda.[169] Even if we concede that ἰσότης can mean merely fairness, the term usually means equality.[170] Why would an author intending to suppress equality between master and slave choose such language?

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[168] So Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln*, 50–53; Dibelius, *Kolosser*, 47–48; Rengstorf, *Mann und Frau*, 22–52; Dupar, *Haustafeln*, 92–94; 233–36; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 162; Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, 119; Schrage, "Zur Ethik"; Schweizer, "Weltlichkeit"; Thraede, "Hintergrund"; Laub, *Begegnung*, 83–98; Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen," 1078–86; Berger, *Formgeschichte*, 135–41; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 171; Sanders, *Ethics*, 73–75; Schrage, *Ethics*, 248–56; Motyer, "Relationship"; Martin, "Haustafeln"; Aletti, *Colossiens*, 254–55; Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (New York: UBS, 1993), 98; D'Angelo, "Colossians"; Garnsey, *Ideas*, 176–80; Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 223–27; Hans Hübner, *An Philemon, An die Kolosser, An die Epheser*, HNT 12 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 114; Walter T. Wilson, *The Hope of Glory: Education and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Colossians*, NovTSup 88 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 41; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 253; Woyke, *Haustafeln*, 54–60; William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 75; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 813; Maisch, *Kolossä*, 256–57; Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 242; Berger, *Formen*, 196–201; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 143–44; Borg and Crossan, *First Paul*, 45–47; Hellholm, "Gattung," 109; Gordon Zerbe and Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, "The Letter to the Colossians," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 294–303, esp. 297–299; Avalos, *Slavery*, 119–24; Glancy, *Moral Problem*, 55–57; Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 199–200; Martinsen, "New Life," 59–61; Tinsley, *Postcolonial*, 169–71.

[169] Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, 150–51.

[170] See Note 1 in Chapter 1.

Likewise, many studies completely ignore the possibility that Eph 6:9 would have been heard as a command to serve slaves.[171] This omission is particularly striking in those studies which explicitly deny that the Ephesian *Haustafel* urges masters to serve their slaves. For example, Glancy describes Eph 6:7 (μετ᾽ εὐνοίας δουλεύοντες) as a "one-sided" command which thus stands in contradiction with Gal 5:13 (δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις).[172] Hector Avalos likewise asserts, "Christian slaves were told to obey their masters, while free Christians never had an equivalent instruction."[173] In discussing Eph 5:21, Weidinger claims that "the *Haustafel* presents no examples of mutual subordination" (*bringt die Haustafel keine Beispiele von gegenseitiger Unterordnung*).[174] However, if τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς is pressed literally, all of these assertions are false. Thus it is surprising that these scholars never even discuss the ambiguity surrounding the antecedent of τὰ αὐτὰ.

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[171] So Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln*, 59–62; Dibelius, *Kolosser*, 96; Rengstorf, *Mann und Frau*, 22–52; Schrage, "Zur Ethik"; Schweizer, "Weltlichkeit"; Hodge, *Ephesians*, 368–69; Thraede, "Hintergrund"; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, EKKNT (Zürich: Benziger, 1982), 270–71; Berger, "Hellenistische Gattungen," 1078–86; Berger, *Formgeschichte*, 135–41; Bruce, *Epistles*, 401; Laub, "Sozialgeschichtlicher Hintergrund"; Sanders, *Ethics*, 73–75; Schulz, *Neutestamentliche Ethik*, 584–86; Schrage, *Ethics*, 248–56; Motyer, "Relationship"; Strecker, "Haustafeln," 374; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 423; Martin, "*Haustafeln*"; Pokorný, *Epheser*, 237–38; Tanzer, "Ephesians"; Davies, "Work," 344; Garnsey, *Ideas*, 176–80; Matera, *Ethics*, 223–27; Hübner, *An Philemon*, 255; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 253; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 336; Woyke, *Haustafeln*, 54–60; Standhartinger, "Origin," 128–29; Webb, *Slaves, Women*, 75; Berger, *Formen*, 196–201; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 143–44; Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 90; John Paul Heil, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ*, SBLStBL 13 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007), 267; Hering, *Haustafeln*, 153–54; Gerhard Sellin, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, KEK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 470; Borg and Crossan, *First Paul*, 45–47; Hellholm, "Gattung," 109; Glancy, *Moral Problem*, 55–57; Roitto, *Behaving*, 205–13; Thompson, *Moral Formation*, 199–200; Martinsen, "New Life," 59–61.

[172] Glancy, *Moral Problem*, 57.

[173] Avalos, *Slavery*, 118.

[174] Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln*, 59. See also Tanzer, "Ephesians," 345.

Moreover, while some studies take seriously the radical interpretations of Col 4:1 or Eph 6:9, scholars have surprisingly overlooked the fact that *both* commands are ambiguous and provocative. Standhartinger, for example, argues that the use of the term ἰσότης in Col 4:1 "calls into question any distinction between those who are free and those who are not." However, she then asserts that the authors of Ephesians chose to expunge this word in order to bring the *Haustafel* into conformity with the conventional "Roman-Hellenistic mentality."[175] She never considers that Eph 6:9, if pressed literally, also "calls into question any distinction between those who are free and those who are not." In fact, while Standhartinger interprets the redaction of Col 4:1 in Eph 6:9 as an attempt to make a subversive command conventional, Belz takes precisely the opposite view. Belz, who interprets Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves, argues that the redaction of Col 4:1 in Eph 6:9 is an attempt to make a conventional command subversive.[176] Neither Belz nor Standhartinger considers the fact that both commands are open to radical interpretation.

Harrill likewise describes Col 4:1 as a "vague" exhortation which "might be read as a call for general manumission or even criticism of slavery," but then argues that the Ephesian redaction was an attempt to "preclude" such a misreading. Harrill never considers that the command, "do the same things to them," is also ambiguous and open to radical interpretation. On the contrary, Harrill simply asserts that Eph 6:9 is "less abstract," "more straightforward," and "clear." According to Harrill, Eph 6:9 is a "clarification" which "ends ambiguity" and "plainly" tells the masters what to do.[177] Despite these assertions, however, commentators routinely

[175] Standhartinger, "Origin," 127–30. So also Standhartinger, *Studien*, 275–76.

[176] Belz, "Proper," 240.

[177] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 90.

discuss the imprecision and ambiguity of the command.[178] Some even describe Col 4:1 as "much clearer" and "more concrete" (*konkreter*) than Eph 6:9.[179]

In summary, many questions concerning the *Haustafeln* remain unanswered, but at least one has not even been asked: why are both commands to masters framed with language which, if pressed literally, suggests a radical egalitarianism? In the following chapters, I will seek to answer this question. I will then explore the consequences that this answer has for the various unresolved questions surveyed above.

[178] So Gnilka, *Der Epheserbrief*, 302; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 454; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 425.

[179] Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 281; Schnackenburg, *Epheser*, 271.

CHAPTER 3:
The Earliest Interpretations of Colossians 4:1 and Ephesians 6:9

As discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of modern scholars reject or ignore both the interpretation of Col 4:1 as command to grant slaves equality and the interpretation of Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves. However, scholars have given very little attention to the interpretation of these verses in the early church. Colossians 4:1a and Eph 6:9a are cited a total of sixteen times in the extant Greek literature prior to 500 CE.[1] Many of these citations appear in obscure passages which are not available in translation and which have thus been overlooked in the modern scholarship on the *Haustafeln*.[2] In the literature surveyed in Chapter 2, only John Chrysostom's interpretation of Eph 6:9 and Theodoret of Cyrus's interpretation of Col 4:1 are mentioned.[3]

This omission is unfortunate, for the Greek fathers provide an important perspective on the interpretations of Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9. First, as native Greek speakers, the fathers would have presumably understood the nuances of the word ἰσότης.[4] Furthermore, they lived within the context of Roman slavery. The fathers may have owned slaves themselves, and they certainly pastored congregations which included both masters and slaves.[5] As discussed in Chapter 1, both

[1] This count does not include an allusion to Col 4:1 found in a passage falsely attributed to Basil the Great: Τὸ δίκαιον γὰρ καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα κελευόμεθα φυλάττειν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς δούλους (For we are commanded to preserve justice and τὴν ἰσότητα even with our slaves). This passage occurs verbatim in two spurious works: *Serm. morib.* 32:1164.14–15 and *Hom. miser.* 31:1709.2–3. The translation is my own.

[2] One of these passages was only discovered in 2012. See Section 3.1.2 below.

[3] Theodoret's interpretation of Col 4:1 is cited approvingly in Stählin, *TDNT* 3:355. Chrysostom's interpretation of Eph 6:9 is cited by many scholars, but usually rejected (see Section 2.3.5 above).

[4] Severian's native language was Syriac, but only his Greek works have survived (S. J. Voicu, "Severian of Gabala," EAC 3:562–64, esp. 562).

[5] Cf. Chrys. *Ad illum. cat.* 2.5 [49:239.15–17].

the interpretation of Col 4:1 as a command to grant slaves equality and the interpretation of Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves are typically rejected as impossible given the obvious fact that the *Haustafeln* assume the continuation of slavery in the Christian community. However, if the Greek fathers who lived within the context of Christian slavery adopt these interpretations, such an argument is seriously undermined.

In this chapter, I first consider the earliest interpretations of Col 4:1. I then consider the earliest interpretations of Eph 6:9. In each case, I examine all extant citations in the Greek literature prior to 500 CE. I also examine the following ancient translations: Latin (Old Latin and Vulgate), Syriac (Peshitta), and Coptic (Sahidic and Bohairic).

3.1. The Earliest Interpretations of Colossians 4:1

The command, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε (Col 4:1), is quoted or paraphrased ten times in the extant Greek literature prior to 500 CE. The verse is also attested in several early translations. In what follows, I first examine the Greek citations in approximate chronological order and then examine the translations.[6] For each citation or translation, I seek to determine whether or not the author interprets Col 4:1 as a command to treat slaves as equals.

3.1.1. Clement of Alexandria

The command to grant slaves τὴν ἰσότητα is first cited by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150 – ca. 215 CE). In a passage arguing that women and slaves can attain the same heights of Christian virtue as free men, Clement quotes the full Colossian *Haustafel* (3:18–4:1). Unfortunately, Clement does not comment on the meaning of ἰσότης. However, at the conclusion of the *Haustafel*, Clement seamlessly merges Col 4:1 with Col 3:11 as follows:

[6] The dates for the church fathers are taken from the *ODCC*.

> "Masters, render to your servants τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα; knowing that you also have a Master in heaven [Col 4:1], where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free: but Christ is all, and in all" [Col 3:11]. And the earthly Church is the image of the heavenly, as we pray also "that the will of God may be done upon the earth as in heaven" [Matt 6:10]. (*Strom.* 4.8.65.3–4)[7]

This connection between Col 3:11 and 4:1 is noteworthy because of a later passage in the same work. In this later passage, Clement references Jesus' response to the question, "Who is the greatest?" (Matt 18:1–3; NRSV). Clement writes, "And on the disciples, striving for the pre-eminence, He enjoins equality with simplicity [μετὰ ἁπλότητος τὴν ἰσότητα], saying 'that they must become as little children.' Likewise also the apostle writes, that 'no one in Christ is slave or free, or Greek or Jew'" (5.5.30.3–4).[8]

The contrast between τὴν ἰσότητα and the drive for "pre-eminence" indicates that ἰσότης here refers to equality.[9] Furthermore, Clement supports the injunction to equality by citing Gal 3:28. In his loose paraphrase of this verse, Clement emphasizes the second of the three pairs listed by Paul: slave/free. Clement omits the male/female pair and places the slave/free pair first.[10] Therefore, in the Pauline affirmation that in Christ there is neither slave nor free (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11), Clement evidently finds a mandate for equality (ἰσότης).[11] In summary, while we do not have enough evidence to draw firm conclusions concerning Clement's interpretation

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[7] Translation taken with slight modification from *ANF* 2:421.

[8] Translation taken with slight modification from *ANF* 2:451.

[9] The contrast between ἰσότης and the drive for pre-eminence appears many times in the extant Greek literature (Arist. *Pol.* 4.4.2 [1291B.31–37]; Philo *Spec. Laws* 4.74; Diod. Sic. 20.79.3; Plut. *Them*. 22.3; etc.)

[10] The influence of Col 3:11 (ὅπου οὐκ ἔνι Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος) may explain why Clement reverses the order of Gal 3:28 in placing "Greek" before "Jew."

[11] See also *Paed.* 1.28.5–32.1, where Clement uses Gal 3:28 and 1 Cor 12:13 to support the notion of ἰσότης in salvation, and *Paed.* 3.12.92.4, where Clement writes, "Domestics, too, are to be treated like ourselves; for they are human beings, as we are. For God is the same to free and bond, if you consider" (*ANF* 2:451).

of ἰσότης in Col 4:1, Clement did use the term in a similar context to refer to an equality shared by Christian masters and slaves.

3.1.2. Origen

After Clement, the next citation of Col 4:1a appears in the extant writings of his pupil, Origen (ca. 185 – ca. 254 CE). Origen cites this verse in only two obscure passages. One passage is from the sixteenth volume of his commentary on Matthew. The Greek text of this volume has long been available to scholars, and a German translation was published in 1990.[12] However, no English translation appeared until 2017, when Justin Gohl posted a "provisional translation" online.[13] The other passage is from a collection of twenty-nine homilies on the Psalms which was only discovered in 2012.[14] Though a critical edition of the Greek text appeared in 2015, a translation has yet to be published.[15] These two passages from Origen are the earliest extant citations of Col 4:1 from which a definitive judgement can be made concerning the author's interpretation of τὴν ἰσότητα. Both passages reveal that Origen understood Col 4:1 as a

[12] Hermann J. Vogt, *Origenes: Der Kommentar zum Evangelium nach Mattäus*, BGL 30 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1990).

[13] Justin M. Gohl, "Origen of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew, Book 16: Translation & Notes," 2017, https://www.academia.edu/35210397/Origens_Commentary_on_Matthew_Book_16_--_An_English_Translation. The identification of this translation as "provisional" appears in the abstract posted by the author on Academia.edu.

[14] Lorenzo Perrone, "Riscoprire Origene oggi: prime impressioni sulla raccolta di omelie sui salmi nel codex Monacensis graecus 314," *Adamantius* 18 (2012): 41–58; Claudia Fabian, "29 Griechische Predigten des Origenes: Ein spektakulärer Fund als Ergebnis der DFG-geförderten Erschließung mittelalterlicher Handschriften," *Bibliotheks Magazin: Mitteilungen aus den Staatsbibliotheken in Berlin und München* 1 (2013): 20–24, esp. 20; Lorenzo Perrone, "The 'Ultimate' Origen: The Discovery of the Munich Codex," *Electryone* 3.1 (2015): 12–27.

[15] Lorenzo Perrone, *Origenes Werke XIII: Die neuen Psalmenhomilien: Eine kritische Edition des Codex Monacensis Graecus 314*, GCS N.F. 19 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

command to treat slaves as equals, not merely a command to treat them fairly. Furthermore, neither passage indicates any confusion or dispute surrounding the meaning of the command.

3.1.2.1. Commentary on Matthew 20

In Matt 20:25–28, Jesus urges his disciples not to act as masters (κατακυριεύω) but instead to become slaves (δοῦλος). Origen paraphrases the exhortation as follows:

> Let neither those who have been entrusted with a certain rule over those who believe on me, nor those who have been deemed to have an authority in the Church of my God and Father, lord it over their own brothers, nor let them be domineering over those who have fled to the divine piety through me. But if in fact someone desires to be judged great by my Father and as having a preeminence by comparison to his own brothers, let him serve all those over whom he desires to be greatest. And if indeed someone yearns for the first places with me, let him understand that no one will be first who does not perform the service that is available to him in modesty and with a praiseworthy humility. (*Comm. Matt.* 16.8.106–124)[16]

Origen then comments on the parallel passage in Luke 22:25–27.

> [Luke is] teaching us that he who would truly be "greatest" among us must become "as the youngest" (that is, as a child) for the sake of simplicity and equality [ἁπλότητος καὶ ἰσότητος], and the one "who leads (thus I think he names the one who is called bishop in the churches) must become as the one" who serves those who are subordinate. (16.8.133–40)

Note that Origen interprets the command to become as a child in precisely the same way that Clement interpreted the command in *Strom.* 5.30.3–5 (see Section 3.1.1 above). Both understand Jesus' words as a command to simplicity (ἁπλότης) and equality (ἰσότης).[17]

After thus paraphrasing these two passages, Origen proceeds to address that particular concern at which he has already hinted: the behavior of ecclesiastical leaders. It is here that

[16] Translation from Gohl, "Origen," 23–26.

[17] A search of the TLG corpus reveals that outside of the two cited passages in Clement and Origen, ἁπλότης and ἰσότης are adjoined only in Xenocrates 224.3 (κατὰ πάντα ἰσότητι καὶ ἁπλότητι). However, ἰσότης is routinely contrasted with πλεονεξία, a vice associated with luxury and extravagance (so Menander *Monost.* 259, 672; Mus. Ruf. 4.83; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 17.9). See the discussion in Section 4.1 below.

Origen cites Col 4:1. Note that the word ἰσότης occurs thrice in this passage: once in the citation of Col 4:1 and twice in the ensuing discussion.

> Now, the Word of God teaches us these things, but, whether it is because we do not understand the intention of Jesus' teaching in these passages, or because we despise precepts so great as these from the Savior, we ourselves act at times with an arrogance exceeding those who rule wickedly among the nations. … This is in fact something one sees among many churches held in esteem, and especially in the churches of great cities. Those who lead the people of God allow no one to have any sort of equality [ἰσολογίαν] with themselves, even sometimes when the most excellent of Jesus' disciples (lacuna) are around them. The Apostle gives a command to lords concerning their house slaves, saying, "Lords, provide what is just and fair to your slaves [τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε], knowing that you too have a Lord in heaven" [Col 4:1], and he teaches masters to forego threatening against their house slaves [cf. Eph 6:9]. We have seen certain bishops cruelly threatening, whether on the pretext of sin, or whether because they despise the poor, in direct contradiction to the apostolic word in which it is said, "They gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, in order that we might go to the nations, and they to the circumcision; only that we might remember the poor" [Gal 2:9–10]. These bishops in turn neither understand their equality with those who are subordinate [τὴν πρὸς τοὺς ὑποχειρίους ἰσότητα] nor have a conception that freedom from arrogance and equality [ἀτυφίαν καὶ ἰσότητα] are fitting especially for Christians engaged in public affairs, and especially among those who hold an eminent position as they bear the name of the Church. For it is written, "To such degree as you are great, humble yourself to that same degree, and you will find favor before the Lord" [Sir 3:18]. …
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> I have said all these things for one who desires to attend with regard to the teaching that the ruler of the Church must not imitate the ruler of the nations, nor emulate those kings who lord it over and are domineering over their people, but as much as one is able one must imitate Christ in these matters, who was most agreeable and held converse with women and laid hands on children. Now if the account where Jesus poured "water into a basin" and purified "the feet of the disciples" [John 13:5] is significant, it is no less the case that—even according to the letter—we must listen to him who said these things, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you speak rightly, for I am" [John 13:13], etc., for through these things he teaches the disciples to become imitators of his praiseworthy humility. (16.8.141–90, 247–70)[18]

Though Gohl follows the standard translation of Col 4:1 and renders the first occurrence of ἰσότης as "fair," this is not what the term means when repeated twice by Origen. Though he would no doubt approve of fair conduct, Origen is not in this passage exhorting bishops to stop

[18] Origen elsewhere connects Luke 22:27 with John 13 (*Comm. Jo.* 32.49, 100).

defrauding their parishioners. Instead, Origen is exhorting bishops to remember that their position of leadership does not make them superior to their brothers, however lowly these brothers may appear in the eyes of the world. The fault under consideration is not unfairness but rather arrogance.[19] Thus, as Gohl recognizes in his translation, the second and third occurrences of ἰσότης mean "equality." Furthermore, in highlighting their failure to realize ἰσότης, Origen is obviously portraying these bishops as violating Col 4:1.[20] If Origen does not understand τὴν ἰσότητα in Col 4:1 as equality, then the relevance of this verse to his argument is inexplicable. Thus we must conclude that Origen understood τὴν ἰσότητα in Col 4:1 as equality. According to Origen, bishops violate Col 4:1 when they fail to treat their parishioners as equals.[21]

Note that while Origen insists on equality between bishops and parishioners, he is not thereby suggesting that ecclesiastical offices are invalid and should be abolished. Origen evidently did not consider hierarchical authority structures to be incompatible with the equality of the subordinate and superordinate parties. In his homily on Luke 2:49–51, Origen reveals that he does not even consider hierarchical authority structures to be incompatible with the superiority of the subordinate party:

> The greater is subject to the lesser. ... If Jesus, the Son of God, is subject to Joseph and Mary, shall I not be subject to the bishop? God appointed him a father to me. Shall I not be subject to the presbyter, whom the Lord's choice set over me? I think Joseph understood that Jesus, who was subject to him, was greater than he. ... So each one should

[19] Note that Origen links ἰσότης with ἀτυφία (freedom from arrogance; lack of pride). These two words are used together thrice in Philo (*Dreams* 2.14; *Decalogue* 162; *Rewards* 59). They are also used together in another passage attributed to Origen (*Sel. Ps.* 12:1441.41–43). On the contrast between ἰσότης and pride, see also Let. Aris. 262–63; Philo *Spec. Laws* 2.18–21; 4.74, 165; *Moses* 1.328. The English glosses for ἀτυφία are from LSJ 274; GE 335.

[20] Note the chiastic structure: (A) Command: Grant τὴν ἰσότητα (Col 4:1); (B) Command: Leave off threatening (Eph 6:9); (B′) Violation: Bishops threaten; (A′) Violation: Bishops do not realize τὴν ἰσότητα.

[21] Origen elsewhere connects the behavior of a bishop towards his parishioner with the behavior of a master towards his slave (*Comm. Jo.* 32.133).

> realize that often a lesser man is put in charge of better men. Sometimes it happens that he who is subject is better than he who appears to be in authority. (*Hom. Luc.* 20.5)[22]

Passages such as this illustrate the danger of the facile assumption that because the fathers did not seek to abolish slavery, they must have interpreted τὴν ἰσότητα in Col 4:1 as meaning merely fairness instead of equality.

3.1.2.2. Homily on Psalm 68

As argued above, Origen's commentary on Matt 20:25–28 demonstrates that he understood τὴν ἰσότητα in Col 4:1 as equality. This conclusion is confirmed by Origen's recently discovered comments on Psa 67:2–4 (MT Psa 68:1–3).[23] In this passage, Origen focuses on the fact that the psalmist addresses God with imperatives (i.e. commands) instead of optatives (i.e. requests).[24] Origen begins by observing, "It is customary in the Scripture in many places to employ imperatives instead of optatives." As an example, he cites the use of imperatives in the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:9–10). Origen asserts that Jesus is not teaching us to "issue commands to God"; rather Jesus is teaching us that we should "speak the wish with imperative utterances." Origen thus concludes, "If these things [in Psa 67:2–4] should also be said with imperative utterances, we should hear instead optatives. For no one issues commands to God" (*Hom. Ps.* 7.2.1–10).[25]

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[22] Translation from Joseph T. Lienhard, *Origen: Homilies on Luke*, FC 94 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 86.

[23] For a brief discussion of this passage, see Perrone, "Riscoprire," 53–54.

[24] Origen raises the same issue in his treatise on prayer (*Or.* 24.5). This was brought to my attention by Perrone, "Riscoprire," 41–58, esp. 52.

[25] The translation is my own. Several brief excerpts from this passage are translated into Italian by Perrone, "Riscoprire," 41–58, esp. 52–54.

Origen continues, however, to offer a more radical argument which he places in the mouth of another:

> But perhaps someone more daring than me will say that these things [in Psa 67:2–4] are able to be said even as imperatives. For if the masters have received the command from Christ, the one speaking in Paul, "Grant to slaves τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα" [Col 4:1], and the good master grants τὴν ἰσότητα to the slaves, why is it surprising that the one being commanded by God and receiving ordinances, being confident on the basis of having kept the ordinances, makes request with a certain boldness [παρρησίας] as if instead to command God? And he will justify such behavior from the other words concerning these things which have been written, and he will say, "I ask something of the Lord our God, being persuaded by the one who said, 'Everyone who asks receives'" [Matt 7:8]. (7.2.19–27)

Note that while Origen cites the full command to grant slaves τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα, he only repeats τὴν ἰσότητα. This is strikingly similar to Origen's use of the verse in his comments on Matt 20:25–28. As noted above, Origen follows his citation of Col 4:1 with a discussion of the bishops' failure to understand τὴν ἰσότητα. He never mentions a failure to understand τὸ δίκαιον. Thus in the only two extant passages in which Origen cites Col 4:1, his interest appears to be primarily in the command to grant slaves τὴν ἰσότητα.

Note further that in citing Col 4:1, Origen is not simply selecting at random one of the many commands found in the Pauline corpus. This particular command is significant for Origen's argument precisely because it concerns the treatment of slaves. The logic of the argument may be summarized as follows: if God commands masters to grant their slaves τὴν ἰσότητα, then we should not be surprised if God grants his slaves τὴν ἰσότητα.

But how does Origen interpret this phrase? If Origen understands τὴν ἰσότητα as equality, then his argument is straightforward: if a master treats his slaves as equals, then those slaves may command their master just as they are commanded by their master. On the other hand, if Origen understands τὴν ἰσότητα as fairness, then his argument makes little sense. A master may treat his slaves fairly, but it hardly follows that those slaves are therefore free to command him. In other

words, the conventional notion that masters should treat their slaves fairly hardly supports the radical conclusion that slaves can issue commands to their masters. Nevertheless, one might argue that Origen's logic is something like this: if a master grants his slaves what they deserve, then those slaves are free to command their master to give them what they are owed. If this is indeed what Origen is suggesting, we would expect his following remarks to unpack the notion of divine recompense for human obedience. On the other hand, if Origen understands τὴν ἰσότητα as equality, we would expect his following remarks to unpack the (audacious) notion of man and God interacting as equals. The latter is precisely what we find.

After citing Col 4:1, Origen continues as follows:

> Therefore, even as we ask from God, God himself has been recorded as being seen, both from this and more generally, not keeping the high status of God, but requesting some things from us. For, if I may speak this way, it is as if God is humble, asking from us the things it has been written that he asks. But what does he ask? Hear from this: "And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask from you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his commandments and to love him and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul?" [Deut 10:12]. As therefore he asks from us, thus also we ask from him, receiving boldness [παρρησίαν] in order to command him, if we keep his ordinances.
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> For it is not greater to command God than to be his heir. Nor is it greater to command God than to be a fellow heir of his Christ. Nor is it greater to command God than for the great Son of God to have become in the midst of men, not as one who reclines at the table, but as one who ministers, one who serves. Nor is it greater to command God than for the Son of God to be stripped and to set aside the garment and to receive the linen cloth and to gird and to take in a basin also water and to wash the feet of the disciples [John 13:3–15]. But concerning the one being washed, he also knows that he is cleansed from being washed. And looking forward because he receives a portion from him from being washed, he also speaks to him with imperatives – not that we are worthy to command, but that the benevolence and the kindness of God towards us is great. For we should hear also this, "Beloved, if the heart does not condemn, we have boldness [παρρησίαν] towards God, and whatever we shall ask we receive from him" [1 John 3:21–22], as John says in the epistle. Only therefore let not the heart condemn, but let your conscience have boldness [παρρησίαν] towards God.
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> And in order that we may be convinced still more concerning the boldness [παρρησίας] which God desires the human to have towards him, I present the very thing which perhaps is greater than to command God: that the Judge is about to be judged with me. Therefore a human says: "That you may be justified in your words and may overcome

> when you are judged" [Rom 3:4], the very thing those who do not comprehend have made, "when I am judged." But what will such ones do also with the other words where it is written, "The Lord himself will come into judgement with the elders of the people and with their rulers" [Isa 3:14]? But if this does not yet clearly prove to you that the Judge as if with you is judged, hear this: "Come and let us examine, says the Lord" [Isa 1:18]. The Lord permits you to speak with boldness [παρρησίας] to him, appointing himself, as it seems to be, an examination, if it even appears that you are able to cross-examine him about being negligent in care for you, and you say with boldness [παρρησίας] such things. For this is clearly shown from the words, "Come and let us examine, says the Lord." But also it is consequent "to the spirit of adoption" [Rom 8:15] and to "you are no longer a slave, but a son" [Gal 4:7]; and your father is God and your brother is the Lord, the one who says, "I will proclaim your name to your brothers," but rather, "to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will sing praises to you" [Heb 2:12]. Why is it paradoxical for a son having boldness [παρρησίαν] towards the father, not putting to shame the spirit of adoption, being commanded by the father, to command the father, being considered worthy concerning what he wishes? Therefore, "Let God arise!" [Psa 67:2]. (7.2.27–71)

In this passage Origen is seeking to establish the fact that God has graciously condescended to interact with us as with equals. Origen does not attempt to establish that the things for which we pray are granted to us as a just recompense for our obedience to God. Origen never claims that God treats us fairly. Thus, in conclusion, Origen's use of Col 4:1 in this homily only makes sense if he understands τὴν ἰσότητα as equality.

Note that Origen's argument is similar to one made by Philo (*Heir* 1–29, esp. 5–7). In Greco-Roman literature, slaves are described as lacking παρρησία, i.e. the freedom to speak their minds.[26] Nevertheless, some moralists encouraged masters to allow their slaves to speak openly.[27] In discussing Abraham's question to God in Gen 15:2, Philo cites approvingly the following line from Menander: "Grant to thy man [i.e. thy slave] some measure of free speech

[26] Slaves are described as lacking παρρησία in Eurip. *Phoen.* 391–92 (quoted in Plut. *Exil.* 16 [*Mor*. 605F–606A]; Mus. Ruf. 9.86–95); Alexis *Mant.* 1.1–3 (quoted in Athen. *Deipn.* 13.7.4–6); Jos. *Ant.* 11.39; Plut. *Dion* 6.4. On the liberties of speech granted to slaves during the Saturnalia, see Plut. *Sull.* 18.5; Lucian *Sat.* 5.16–20; Hor. *Sat.* 2.7.1–5; Sen. Y. *Ep.* 47.10–16. For more on the Saturnalia, see Section 4.3.1 below.

[27] So Ps.-Phoc. 227; Sen. Y. *Ep.* 47.13.

[παρρησίας]" (Frag. 370; cited in Philo *Heir* 5 [Colson, LCL]).[28] Philo then reasons that if an obedient slave has παρρησίαν towards his master, so should the one who is wholly devoted to God have freedom of speech in addressing the Master of all things. Nevertheless, Origen goes much further than Philo, for Philo never suggests that a human can command God. The reason Origen can go further than Philo is because Colossians goes further than Menander. Menander requires masters to grant slaves "some measure of free speech," but on Origen's reading, Colossians requires masters to grant slaves equality.

3.1.3. Peter of Alexandria

Peter of Alexandria (d. 311 CE) cites Col 4:1 while denouncing those Christians who, in order to avoid execution, had compelled their slaves to offer idolatrous sacrifices in their stead. After citing Col 3:11, Peter states, "They [i.e. the masters] have drawn our fellow–slaves [τοὺς συνδούλους] to idolatry who would have been able to escape, had they given to them τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα, as again says the apostle" (*Ep. Can.* 7.18–22).[29] Since forcing one's slave to worship idols would be a violation of both the injunction to treat him as an equal and the injunction to treat him fairly, Peter's statement does not allow us to determine his precise interpretation of τὴν ἰσότητα. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Peter uses σύνδουλος, a term which occurs nowhere else in his extant writings. In the Pauline corpus this term appears only in Colossians (1:7; 4:7), where it is used to describe fellow laborers in the gospel. By using it of literal slaves, however, Peter draws out the egalitarian connotations of this language.

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[28] Elsewhere Philo states that a man of "high position" should not "show himself uplifted with boastful and insolent airs, but honour equality [ἰσότητα] and allow a frank exchange of speech [παρρησίας] to those of low estate" (*Spec. Laws* 4.74 [Colson, LCL]). See the discussion of this passage in Section 4.1 below. For the notion of equality between master and slave in Philo, see Section 4.3.1 below.

[29] Translation taken with slight modification from *ANF* 6:272.

3.1.4. Didymus the Blind

Though blind from childhood, Didymus (ca. 313–98 CE) became "the foremost Christian scholar of his era in Alexandria."[30] Didymus was influenced by Origen, and most of his writings were destroyed after Origen's teachings were condemned in 553 CE. However, in 1941 an accidental discovery uncovered his commentaries on Genesis, Job, Zechariah, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes.[31] In these texts, Col 4:1 is cited twice, once in the commentary on the Psalms and once in the commentary on Ecclesiastes. Neither of these texts are available in translation.

The first citation occurs in Didymus' commentary on Psa 22 (MT Psa 23). While discussing the phrase, "paths of righteousness [τρίβους δικαιοσύνης]" (22:3), Didymus loosely quotes the opening words of Col 4:1 as follows: καὶ ὑμεῖς, οἱ δεσπόται, τὴν ἰσότητα καὶ τὸ δίκαιον. He then states, "Here the just according to merit [τὸ κατ' ἀξίαν δίκαιον] is signified" (*Comm. Ps.* 59.7–8).[32] Since Didymus' interest is in δικαιοσύνη and the related word δίκαιος, he does not comment on ἰσότης.

However, in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, Didymus cites Col 4:1 again, this time omitting δίκαιος: καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ δεσπόται τὴν ἰσότητα πρὸς τοὺς δούλους ἔχετε (and you the masters have τὴν ἰσότητα with the slaves). Didymus follows his paraphrase with the following

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[30] Richard A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 1.

[31] *ODCC* 438. The attribution to Didymus of the commentaries on Psalms, Jeremiah, and especially Ecclesiastes was challenged in L. R. Wickham, "Review of S. Leanza, *Procopii Gazaei Catena in Ecclesiasten necnon Pseudochrysostomi Commentarius in Eundem Ecclesiasten*," *JTS, NS* 31.1 (1980): 218–20, esp. 218–219. Today, however, Didymus is widely accepted as the author of all five commentaries. See Grant D. Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism*, OTRM (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 47; Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 1; A. C. Geljon, "Didymus the Blind Commentary on Psalm 24 (23 LXX): Introduction, Translation and Commentary," *VC* 65.1 (2011): 50–73, esp. 51.

[32] The translation is my own.

application: ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἰσότητα πρὸς τοὺς δούλους οὐκ ἐπίκειται (the one having τὴν ἰσότητα with the slaves is not overbearing; *Comm. Eccl.* 223.4–5).[33] The replacement of the verb παρέχω (grant) with ἔχω (have) and the insertion of the preposition πρός (with) suggest that Didymus understands τὴν ἰσότητα as equality, not fair treatment. Consider Origen's use of this construction. In explaining the behavior of Judas at the last supper, Origen states, "He [i.e. Judas] wished to have equality with him [i.e. Jesus; τὴν ἰσότητα θέλων ἔχειν πρὸς αὐτόν], although he should have given place to him in respect of pre-eminence" (*Comm. Jo.* 32.291–92).[34] Another example of this construction is found in Theodoret's comments on Phil 2:6–7. Here Theodoret describes Jesus as "having equality with the Father" (τὴν πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα ἰσότητα ἔχων; *Interp. epist.* 82:569.28–29)."[35] In both of these examples, τὴν ἰσότητα obviously means equality, not fairness.

3.1.5. Severian of Gabala

Colossians 4:1 is discussed briefly in a fragmentary commentary on Paul's epistles attributed to Severian of Gabala (flourished ca. 400 CE).[36] This commentary is not available in translation. The discussion of Col 4:1 read as follows:

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[33] The translation is my own. This passage is discussed in Bart D. Ehrman, "Jesus and the Adulteress," *NTS* 34 (1988): 24–44, esp. 25. However, Ehrman omits any mention of the changes that Didymus has made to the text of Col 4:1. Ehrman simply remarks, "Didymus quotes Paul as saying that masters must treat their slaves fairly."

[34] See Matt 26:23; Mark 14:20; Luke 22:21; John 13:26. Translation from Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, FC 89 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 2:396.

[35] Translation from Robert C. Hill, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul*, 2 vols. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox, 2001), 2:70.

[36] Most of the fragments of commentary are attributed to Severian in *CPG* 4219, though a handful of exceptions are noted. Nevertheless, on account of differences in style, S. J. Voicu doubts that the author of these fragments is the same as the author of the corpus of homilies attributed to Severian ["Severian," 3:562–63].

> When the slaves, he says, render service to you with affection [μετ᾽ εὐνοίας; cf. Eph 6:7], you also the masters according to the just and the equal repay them [κατὰ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἴσον αὐτοὺς ἀμείβεσθε] with the appropriate solicitude. Therefore τὴν ἰσότητα according to the affection [τὴν ἰσότητα οὖν κατὰ τὴν εὔνοιαν]. (*Fr. Col.* 328.12–14)[37]

The replacement of the verb παρέχεσθε (grant) with the verb ἀμείβεσθε (repay), the insertion of the preposition κατά (according to), and the replacement of ἰσότης with ἴσος (equal) indicate that Severian understands the command to grant slaves τὴν ἰσότητα as merely a command to treat them fairly. As discussed in Section 4.2.1.1 below, the word ἴσος is often used with δίκαιος to mean "fair" in a sense that is virtually indistinguishable from δίκαιος. For example, Polybius writes, "They begged the legates themselves to act as fair (ἴσους) and just (δικαίους) judges in the matter" (*Hist.* 24.15.3 [Paton, LCL]).

Nevertheless, the last line of the commentary is intriguing. Though Severian uses τὸ ἴσον in his paraphrase, he now introduces τὴν ἰσότητα. His meaning, however, is not entirely clear. As discussed in Section 4.2.1.3 below, Greek writers occasionally distinguish between various types of ἰσότης. This was sometimes done with a κατά prepositional phrase. For example, Philo (*Heir* 192–95) distinguishes between an ἰσότης which is κατ᾽ ἀριθμὸν (according to number) and an ἰσότης which is κατ᾽ ἀναλογίαν (according to proportion).[38] An example of the former would be a collection in which everyone contributes $100; an example of the latter would be a collection in which everyone contributes 10% of their paycheck.[39] By specifying that τὴν ἰσότητα is "according to affection," the author may be attempting to explain how this term could be used in reference to masters and slaves. Note that the paraphrase adds both "with affection" (μετ᾽ εὐνοίας) and "with appropriate solicitude" (ἐν τῇ προσηκούσῃ κηδεμονίᾳ), neither of which

[37] The translation is my own.

[38] See also Arist. *Pol.* 5.1.7 [1301B.31–37]; Isoc. *Or.* 7.21–22.

[39] On the distinction between numerical and proportional equality, see Section 4.2.1.3 below.

correspond to any part of Col 3:22–4:1. Thus the author appears to be intentionally drawing a parallel between slaves and masters. Perhaps the point is that while slaves and masters do not share an equality of rank, authority, or situation, they nevertheless share an equality of affection.

3.1.6. John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom (ca. 347 – 407 CE) appears to understand Col 4:1 as a conventional command to treat slaves fairly. In his commentary on Colossians, Chrysostom asks,

> What is "τὸ δίκαιον"? What is "ἰσότης"? To place them [i.e. the slaves] in plenty of everything, and not allow them to stand in need of others, but to recompense [ἀμείβεσθαι] them for their labors. For, because I have said that they have their reward from God, do not you therefore deprive them of it. (*Hom. Col.* 10 [62:368.14–18])[40]

Is Chrysostom suggesting that masters pay their slaves a salary? While some slaves did earn salaries, the suggestion that household slaves should receive a salary from their master would be quite radical.[41] However, other authors describe the room and board that a slave receives as a salary.[42] In recommending the just treatment of slaves, Cicero urges masters to treat their slaves like their "employees," in the sense that the slaves must be not only "required to work" but also "given their dues" (*Off.* 1.41 [Miller, LCL]). In a treatise on household management, pseudo-Aristotle advises the master not to withhold sustenance from the slave, stating, "Food is a slave's pay" ([*Oec.*] 1.5.3 [1344B.4; Armstrong, LCL]). This particular piece of advice was declared by Philodemus to be "commonplace and observed by the more decent type of person" (*Prop.* 9.44–10.2).[43] Seneca even states that certain public officials were tasked with restraining the

[40] Translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 13:305.

[41] Pliny references slaves working as public officials who received "an annual salary for their work" (*Ep.* 10.31.2 [Radice, LCL]).

[42] See Heinz Bellen, *Studien zur Sklavenflucht in Römischen Kaiserreich* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971), 131–32.

[43] Translation from Tsouna, *Philodemus*, 27–29.

"stinginess" of masters who withheld from their slaves "the necessities of life" (*Ben.* 3.22.3 [Basore, LCL]).

In conclusion, Chrysostom seems to understand the command to grant slaves τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα as a conventional command to provide for their needs. Of course, treating slaves as equals would include providing for their needs, so we cannot absolutely rule out the possibility that Chrysostom understood ἰσότης in Col 4:1 as equality. Nevertheless, his comments give us no reason to believe that he understood Col 4:1 as a command for masters to treat their slaves as equals.

3.1.7. Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350 – 428 CE) produced his commentary on the Pauline epistles sometime from 392 to 428 CE.[44] The commentary was composed in Greek, and some Greek fragments have survived. The comments on Col 4:1, however, are extant only in Latin translation. Theodore writes,

> He [i.e. Paul] urges masters to bestow what is fitting on slaves, acting humanely toward them, bestowing affection on them in deed, and displaying care for them as far as possible. And let them bestow pardon on them when they transgress, since it will fall to their lot to sin. For he says *just and fair* [*iustum et aequum*] not so as to think that the slaves are equal to the masters, for how could this be when he wrote that slaves should serve and should serve with complete affection? (*Comm. Col.* 430.4–10).[45]

Thus we have the first explicit rejection of the view that Col 4:1 is a command to treat slaves as equals. Like most modern scholars, Theodore believes that such an interpretation is incompatible with the context. According to Theodore, Col 4:1 is merely a conventional command to treat slaves fairly.

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[44] Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on the Minor Pauline Epistles*, WGRW 26 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2010), xi.

[45] Text and translation from Greer, *Theodore*, 430–31.

3.1.8. Pseudo-Chrysostom

Colossians 4:1 is referenced in a homily on the story in Luke 7:2–10. This homily, which is not available in translation, has been passed down under the name of John Chrysostom. The true author is unknown, but evidently wrote before the Council of Ephesus (431 CE).[46] In a brief discussion of the slave/master relationship, the author paraphrases Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9:

> "A centurion there," he says, "had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death" [Luke 7:2]. For greed also notices the life of the slave, but the right-mindedness of the master does not deny the kinship of nature [τὸ συγγενὲς τῆς φύσεως]. He does not spit upon him as a house slave, but loves him as a kinsman [ὡς ὁμόφυλον], lightening the burden of the yoke of slavery with benevolence. Hear and learn, oh masters of slaves, not to look down on house slaves as others by nature [ὡς ἀλλοτρίων τῆς φύσεως], nor indeed to neglect family [τῶν ὁμογενῶν] as enemies, obeying the blessed Paul who said, "Masters, grant τὴν ἰσότητα to the slaves, giving up the threat [πρὸς τοὺς δούλους τὴν ἰσότητα παρέχεσθε, ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλὴν], knowing that the Lord in heaven rules over them and over you." God permits him to be a slave, in order that you may learn to be a slave to God. Do you demand goodwill from the house slave? You yourself also have goodwill for the Master. Do you punish the one sinning? Therefore do not sin, in order that you may not be punished by God. Are you not granting forbearance to a kinsman [ὁμογενεῖ]? Do not yourself ask God for forbearance. For the other gospel teaches you to pray thus: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" [Matt 6:12]. Therefore as seeking benevolence from God, thus also you dispense benevolence to the kinsmen [τοῖς ὁμοφύλοις]. (*In cent.* 61:769.47–69)[47]

This passage suggests that the author understands τὴν ἰσότητα in Col 4:1 as equality, not fairness. The author cites Col 4:1 to support his argument that slaves should be loved as kin, not scorned as inferiors. The passage is filled with language implying that masters and slaves share an ontological equality: συγγενής, φύσις, ὁμογενής (2x), and ὁμόφῡλος (2x).[48] The author makes

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[46] Benedikt Marx, *Procliana: Untersuchung über den homiletischen Nachlaß des Patriarchen Proklos von Konstantinopel* (Münster: Aschendorffsche, 1940), 36–37. See also J. A. de Aldama, *Repertorium Pseudochrysostomicum* (Paris: CNRS, 1965), 40.

[47] The translation is my own. When rendering Luke 7:2 and Matt 6:12, I have followed the NRSV.

[48] On the ontological equality of master and slave in patristic sources, see also *Const. apost.* 4.12.5–6; Clem. Alex. *Paed.* 3.12.92.4; Ambrosiaster *Comm.* Col 4:1; Theodoret *Interp. epist.* 82:552.22–23; Gregory I *Past. Care* 3.5; *Ep.* 6.12; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 5.14–15 [5.15–16]; Basil *Spir.*

no reference in this passage to the notion of justice or fair treatment. Like Didymus in his commentary on Ecclesiastes (see Section 3.1.4 above), the author of this homily has simply dropped τὸ δίκαιον from his paraphrase of Col 4:1.

3.1.9. Theodoret of Cyrus

Like Theodore, Theodoret of Cyrus (ca. 393 – ca. 460 CE) explicitly rejects the view that Col 4:1 requires masters to grant their slaves equality. In his commentary on Colossians, Theodoret writes, "By 'ἰσότητα' he [i.e. Paul] referred not to equality of respect [τὴν ἰσοτιμίαν] but to due care [τὴν προσήκουσαν ἐπιμέλειαν], which house slaves ought to receive from their masters" (*Interp. epist.* 82:621.47–49).[49]

sanct. 20 [51.7–8]; Greg. Nyssa *Hom. Eccl.* 4 [5.334.4–338.22]; Cyril Alex. *Fr. 1 Cor.* 273.11–274.8 [note the use of ἰσότης and the connection with Col 3:11]. For translations, see Gerald L. Bray, *Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon: Ambrosiaster*, ACT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009); Henry Davis, *St. Gregory the Great: Pastoral Care*, ACW 11 (New York: Newman, 1950), 101; Mary Francis McDonald, *Lactantius: The Divine Institutes, Books I-VII*, FC 49 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1964); Stuart George Hall and Rachel Moriarty, "Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes," in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies*, ed. Stuart George Hall (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 31–144. For a translation of Basil, see Garnsey, *Ideas*, 45. For non-Christian expressions of the ontological equality of master and slave, see Section 4.3.1 below.

[49] Translation taken with slight modification from Hill, *Theodoret*, 2:100. For the influence of Chrysostom on Theodoret, see Hill, *Theodoret*, 1:2. Elsewhere, Theodoret does acknowledge a certain equality between master and slave. In his commentary on Phlm 13, Theodoret writes, "Notice the power of the Gospel, making the servant equal [ἴσον] to the master" (*Interp. epist.* 82:876.14–16; translation from Hill, *Theodoret*, 2:263). In his commentary on Phlm 16, John Chrysostom does apply the term ἰσοτιμία to the slave Onesimus: "By calling him his son, he [i.e. Paul] hath shown his natural affection; and by calling him his brother, his great good will for him, and his equality in honor [τὴν ἰσοτιμίαν]" (*Hom. Phlm.* 2.2 [62:711.32–35; *NPNF*[1] 13:552]).

3.1.10. Old Latin and Vulgate

Colossians was evidently translated into Latin at an early date, for Tertullian (ca. 160 CE – ca. 225 CE) appears to reference a Latin translation of Paul's letters (*Mon*. 11; *Marc*. 5.4).[50] Furthermore, most scholars believe that the various Latin translations of the NT ultimately stem from one initial translation.[51] However, the earliest extant Latin translation of Col 4:1 is the text used by Ambrosiaster in his commentary on Paul (366 – 384 CE).[52]

Both the extant Old Latin translations and the Vulgate render Col 4:1 as follows: *quod iustum est et aequum servis praestate* ("do to your servants that which is just and equal").[53] The Latin word *aequum* could mean both "equality" and "what is right, fair, or equitable."[54] The following passage from Tacitus provides an example of *aequum* as equality: "To princes even equality [*aequa*] – to say nothing of humiliation – is an unfamiliar thing" (*Ann.* 2.42 [Jackson, LCL]). However, the insertion of the words *quod est* suggests that *aequum* here means "what is

[50] H. A. G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament: A Guide to Its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 6. See also Jacobus H. Petzer, "The Latin Version of the New Testament," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, SD 46 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 113–30, esp. 120–21.

[51] Petzer, "Latin Version," 123. See also Houghton, *Latin New Testament*, 12.

[52] Hermann Josef Frede, *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel, Band 24.2: Epistulae ad Philippenses et ad Colossenses* (Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder, 1966), 504–5. For a discussion of the Latin translation known to Ambrosiaster and the date of his commentary, see Bray, *Amborsiaster*, xvi–xviii. For more on the Old Latin, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 285–330; Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "Latin Versions," *ABD* 6:799–803, esp. 799–800; Petzer, "Latin Version," 120–23; Houghton, *Latin New Testament*, 12.

[53] Some Old Latin witnesses, including Ambrosiaster, place *est* after *aequum* as follows: *quod iustum et aequum est servis praestate*. For the Latin texts, see Frede, *Vetus Latina, Band 24.2*, 504. Translation from Angela M. Kinney, ed., *The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 6:1070–71.

[54] *OLD* 75.

right, fair, or equitable.” Note that the same construction is found in Seneca: *Ratio id iudicare vult quod aequum est* (“Reason wishes the decision that it gives to be just”; *Ira* 18.1 [Basore, LCL]). Thus the Latin translators apparently understood Col 4:1 as a command to treat slaves fairly.

3.1.11. Syriac Peshitta and Coptic Sahidic

The Coptic Sahidic version, which scholars date from the second to the fourth century, translates Col 4:1 as follows: ⲁⲣⲓⲡⲇⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲛ. ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡϣⲱϣ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲛ̄ϩⲙ̄ϩⲁⲗ.[55] Here ἰσότης is rendered with the Coptic word ϣⲱϣ (equality, sameness).[56] While the letters of Paul are not extant in the Old Syriac, they are extant in the Peshitta, a revision of the Old Syriac completed in the early fifth century.[57] The Peshitta translates Col 4:1 as follows: ܥܒܕܘ ܫܘܝܘܬܐ ܘܟܐܢܘܬܐ ܠܘܬ ܥܒܕܝܟܘܢ.[58]

[55] Coptic text from Herbert Thompson, *The Coptic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles in the Sahidic Dialect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 220. The reference to justice is omitted in the Coptic text used by G. W. Horner, which reads as follows: ⲁⲣⲓ ⲡϣⲱϣ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲛ̄ϩⲙ̄ϩⲁⲗ. Horner renders this text, “Masters, do that [which is] equal to your servants” [*The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect, Otherwise Called Sahidic and Thebaic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911), 5:358–59]. The Coptic text published by Thompson is based on manuscripts older than those available to Horner. For more on the Sahidic version, see Metzger, *Early Versions*, 109–14, 127–32; Watson E. Mills, “Coptic Versions,” *ABD* 6:803; Frederik Wisse, “The Coptic Versions of the New Testament,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, SD 46 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 131–41, esp. 133–37.

[56] The English gloss is from W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939), 606–7. The same gloss is used in Richard Smith, *A Concise Coptic-English Lexicon*, 2nd ed., SBLRBS 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 45.

[57] Metzger, *Early Versions*, 39; S. P. Brock, “Syriac Versions,” *ABD* 6:796.

[58] Syriac text from Barbara Aland and Andreas Juckel, *Das Neue Testament in Syrischer Überlieferung, Vol. 2: Die Paulinischen Briefe, Part 2: 2. Korintherbrief, Galaterbrief, Epheserbrief, Philipperbrief und Kolosserbrief*, ANTF 14 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 440. James Murdock translates the text as follows: “Do equity and justice to your servants” [*The Syriac New Testament*, 9th ed. (Boston: Hastings, 1915), 370]. For more on the Peshitta, see Metzger, *Early Versions*, 48–63; Brock, “Syriac Versions,” 6:796–97. Note the transposition of

Here ἰσότης is rendered with the Syriac word ܫܘܝܘܬܐ (equality, parity).[59] A particular interpretation of Col 4:1 is difficult to discern from these two translations. The Greek word ἰσότης is rendered with Coptic and Syriac words which are glossed in the lexicons as "equality." However, since the distinction between equality and equity is quite subtle, an analysis of the use of these words in the extant Coptic and Syriac literature would be necessary to determine if these words could also be used to mean equity in a sense distinct from equality.

3.1.12. Coptic Bohairic

The Coptic Bohairic translation of Col 4:1 is particularly intriguing: ⲁⲣⲓⲟⲩⲓ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲥⲁⲡ ⲙ̄ⲙⲏⲓ· ⲟⲩⲟⲥ ϫⲁ ⲑⲏⲛⲟⲩ· ⲉⲣⲉⲧⲉⲛϣⲏϣ ⲛⲉⲙ ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲛⲉⲃⲓⲁⲓⲕ.[60] Instead of using the noun form of ϣⲱϣ, which appears in the Sahidic version, the Bohairic employs the verb form (make equal, level, straight).[61] Horner provides the following translation: "Do a just judgement and put yourselves (as) being equal with your servants."[62] Thus the Bohairic version appears to

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justice and equality in the Syriac text (cf. Didymus *Comm. Ps.* 59.7–8 discussed in Section 3.1.4 above). In a cursory search for similar transpositions in the Peshitta, I noticed that grace and peace are occasionally reversed in Paul's greeting, "grace to you and peace." The original order is preserved in 1 Cor 1:3, 2 Cor 1:2, Gal 1:3, Phil 1:2, 1 Thess 1:1, 2 Thess 1:2, and Phlm 3, but peace precedes grace in Rom 1:7, Eph 1:2, and Col 1:2. The significance of such transpositions is unclear.

[59] English gloss from Michael Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum* (Winona Lake, IN: Gorgias, 2009), 1526.

[60] G. W. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect, Otherwise Called Memphitic and Bohairic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905), 3:426.

[61] Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 606–7. The same gloss is used in Smith, *Concise Coptic-English Lexicon*, 45.

[62] This translation is provided by Horner in the textual apparatus of his edition of the Coptic Sahidic version (*Southern Dialect*, 5:358). In his edition of the Coptic Bohairic version, which Horner published six years earlier, he offers this translation: "Give (lit. do) a just judgment and be fair (lit. put you being fair) with your servants" (*Northern Dialect*, 3:427). In this rather

understand Col 4:1 as a command to treat slaves as equals, not merely a command to treat them fairly.

However, the date of this translation is disputed. In a survey of scholarship on the Coptic versions, Bruce Metzger explains that while many scholars in the early twentieth century dated the Bohairic version to the seventh or the eight century, "the picture became entirely changed" by the discovery of some early Bohairic manuscripts, including two from the Pauline corpus.[63] One containing brief excerpts from Romans was dated to the early fourth century, and the other containing a short passage from Philippians was dated to the fourth or fifth century.[64] Furthermore, Paul Kahle, who published the latter text, noted that some early Fayyumic manuscripts agree remarkably with the Bohairic version. This includes three manuscripts containing fragments of the Pauline epistles which are dated to the fourth or fifth century and which "have the text of the Bohairic Version" with "hardly any variants."[65] Based on these discoveries, Kahle concludes, "There can be no question that the Bohairic Version of the New Testament was made not later than the fourth century."[66] Nevertheless, not all scholars agree with Kahle. Frederik Wisse argues,

> The few early Bohairic biblical fragments are idiosyncratic and do not stand in an obvious relationship to the later Bohairic version. Since there is no direct evidence of the

awkward translation, Horner appears to be forcing the Coptic text to align with the majority interpretation of Col 4:1.

[63] Metzger, *Early Versions*, 125–26.

[64] Metzger, *Early Versions*, 123–25. For the excerpts of Romans in the Bohairic dialect, see Elinor M. Husselman, "A Bohairic School Text on Papyrus," *JNES* 6.3 (1947): 129–51. For the passage from Philippians in the Bohairic dialect, see Paul E. Kahle, *Bala'izah: Coptic Texts from Deir El-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 1:377–80.

[65] Kahle, *Bala'izah*, 1:284.

[66] Kahle, *Bala'izah*, 1:250.

> Bohairic version before the ninth century, it is questionable to assume its existence prior to that time.

While Wisse acknowledges that "earlier versions may have been consulted" in the creation of the Bohairic version, he concludes that "in all probability" this version was "basically a fresh translation of the Greek text."[67] In summary, manuscript discoveries in the twentieth century have revealed that at least some portions of Paul's letters were translated into the Bohairic dialect by the fourth century, but the relationship of these early translation efforts to the Bohairic version that survives today is disputed.

3.2. The Earliest Interpretations of Ephesians 6:9

The command, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς (Eph 6:9), is quoted or paraphrased six times in the extant Greek literature prior to 500 CE. The verse is also attested in several early translations. Once again, I first examine the Greek citations in approximate chronological order and then examine the translations. For each citation or translation, I seek to determine whether or not the author interprets Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves.

3.2.1. Clement of Alexandria

The first extant citation of Eph 6:9 is by Clement. Clement cites Eph 6:9 verbatim except for the words, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς. For this command, Clement provides the following paraphrase: εὖ ποιεῖτε τοὺς οἰκέτας ὑμῶν (treat your household slaves well; *Paed.* 3.12.95.1).[68] While Clement has retained the verb ποιεῖτε, he has omitted the direct object τὰ αὐτὰ and replaced it with the adverb εὖ (well). This change removes the ambiguity inherent in τὰ αὐτὰ and

[67] Wisse, "Coptic Versions," esp. 136–37. Wisse does not, however, offer an explanation for the close similarities between the Bohairic version and the Fayyumic fragments cited by Kahle.

[68] The translation is my own.

renders the command a conventional exhortation to treat slaves well. Thus it is unlikely that Clement understood Eph 6:9 to require a master to serve his slave.

3.2.2. Origen

Origen is the second to cite Eph 6:9 and the first to explicitly address the ambiguity. In his commentary on Ephesians, which survives only in fragments, Origen asks, "To which of the things previously mentioned does 'the same' refer? I think that it refers to 'in singleness of heart' [Eph 6:5] and to 'doing the will of God' both 'from the soul' [Eph 6:6] and 'with enthusiasm' [Eph 6:7] in relation to the household slaves" (32.2–4).[69] Note that Origen omits any of the phrases from Eph 5:5–8 which imply obedience or service. Thus, like Clement, Origen does not appear to interpret Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves.[70]

3.2.3. Peter of Alexandria

Peter of Alexandria cites Eph 6:9 in the same text discussed in Section 3.1.3 above. In reference to those masters who compelled their slaves to offer idolatrous sacrifices in their stead, Peter asserts, "They have not obeyed the apostle, who would have the masters 'do the same things unto the slaves, forbearing threatening; knowing,' says he, 'that our and their Master is in

[69] Translation from Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, OECS (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 251. Heine places the composition of Origen's commentary sometime between 232 and 244 CE [*Origen and Jerome*, 47].

[70] In his commentary on Ephesians, written in Latin sometime between 386 and 388 CE, Jerome closely follows Origen's earlier Greek commentary. In his comments on the meaning of τὰ αὐτὰ in Eph 6:9, Jerome simply copies Origen's interpretation (Jerome *Comm. Eph.* 6:9). On the date of Jerome's commentary, see Heine, *Origen and Jerome*, 7.

heaven; and that there is no respect of persons with Him'" (*Ep. Can.* 7.4–11).[71] Once again, Peter's statement does not allow us to determine his precise interpretation of the verse.

3.2.4. Basil the Great

The fourth citation of Eph 6:9 occurs in the *Moral Rules* of Basil, composed in 358 or 359 CE.[72] In the *Moral Rules*, Basil offers instructions followed by excerpts from the NT. While Basil does not specifically comment on the ambiguity of τὰ αὐτὰ, his use of the verse indicates that he understands the command to require masters to serve their slaves. Basil writes,

> It is necessary that the masters, remembering the truth of the Master, of whatever benefit they receive from the slaves, these things also to do to them according to ability, in the fear of God and with forbearance towards them, according to the example of the Master. (*Reg. mor.* 31:856.33–37)[73]

Basil immediately supports this statement with two passages from Scripture: John 13:3–15 and Eph 6:9. Note that the second person plural form of the verb ποιέω serves as a link to connect the exhortation in John 13:15 with the command in Eph 6:9.

> "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him." And after a few things, "You call me Teacher and Master – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Master and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that as I have done to you, you also should do [ποιῆτε]." "Masters, the same things do [ποιεῖτε] to them, giving up the threat, knowing that the Master of you and them is in heaven, and there is no partiality with him." (31:856.39–54)[74]

[71] Translation taken with slight modification from *ANF* 6:272.

[72] *ODCC* 168.

[73] The translation is my own.

[74] When rendering Basil's citation of John 13:3–15, I have followed the NRSV with minor modifications.

Basil explicitly applies Jesus' command in John 13:14 to masters in relation to their slaves.[75] Furthermore, Basil connects John 13:14 with Eph 6:9. Thus for Basil, the τὰ αὐτὰ of Eph 6:9 evidently includes even the servile task of washing feet.[76]

3.2.5. John Chrysostom

Chrysostom is the fifth to cite Eph 6:9 and the second to explicitly comment on the ambiguity. In contrast to Origen, Chrysostom accepts the more radical interpretation of τὰ αὐτὰ. After citing the command, Chrysostom writes,

> The same things. What are these? "With good-will do service" [μετ' εὐνοίας δουλεύετε; cf. Eph 6:7]. However, he does not actually say, "do service" [δουλεύετε], though by saying, "the same things," he plainly shows this to be his meaning. For the master himself is a slave [δουλεύει γὰρ καὶ ὁ δεσπότης]. (*Hom. Eph.* 22 [62.157.19–22])[77]

In his prior comments on Eph 5:21, Chrysostom likewise explained that the mutual submission enjoined in this verse requires masters to serve their slaves:

> Let there be an interchange of slavery [δουλείας] and submission. For then will there be no such thing as slavery [δουλεία]. Let not one sit down in the rank of a freeman, and the other in the rank of a slave; rather it were better that both masters and slaves be slaves to one another [ἀλλήλοις δουλεύειν]; far better to be a slave in this way than free in any other; as will be evident from hence. Suppose the case of a man who should have an hundred slaves, and he should in no way serve them; and suppose again a different case, of an hundred friends, all waiting upon one another. Which will lead the happier life? Which with the greater pleasure, with the more enjoyment? In the one case there is no anger, no provocation, no wrath, nor anything else of the kind whatever; in the other all is fear and apprehension. In the one case too the whole is forced, in the other is of free choice. In the one case they serve one another because they are forced to do so, in the

[75] Origen likewise states that Christian masters should wash the feet of their slaves (*Comm. Jo.* 32.133). The practice is also referenced by Chrysostom (*Hom. Phlm.* 2.3 [62:712.1–3]; cf. *Hom. Eph.* 19 [62.134.28–43]).

[76] On foot-washing as the duty of a slave, see Plut. *Pomp.* 73.7.

[77] Translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 13:158.

> other with mutual gratification. Thus does God will it to be; for this He washed His disciples' feet [cf. John 13:1–15]. (*Hom. Eph.* 19 [62.134.28–43])[78]

3.2.6. Theodore of Mopsuestia

In his commentary on Ephesians, Theodore paraphrases 6:9 as follows: "Show yourselves to them as kind as possible, pardoning their faults when you examine them" (278.27–28).[79] There is no indication here that Theodore interprets the verse as a command to serve slaves. He appears to understand τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς as merely a conventional command to treat slaves kindly.

3.2.7. Theodoret of Cyrus

In his commentary on Eph 6:9, Theodoret offers a brief explanation of the command, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς (Eph 6:9). After quoting the command, Theodoret writes, "Not for them to be enslaved but for them to render service with the right disposition" (Οὐχ ἵνα δουλεύσωσιν, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα εὐνοϊκῶς θεραπεύσωσι; *Interp. epist.* 82:552.15–16).[80] While Chrysostom applies Eph 6:7 (μετ᾽ εὐνοίας δουλεύοντες) directly to the masters, Theodoret apparently struggles with the paradoxical notion of a master serving his slave. The fact that he employs the adverb εὐνοϊκός (well-disposed, kindly, favourable) suggests that he is influenced by εὔνοια (goodwill, favour) in Eph 6:7.[81] However, he rejects δουλεύω and instead uses the verb θεραπεύω to describe the action of the master towards the slave. Nevertheless, the verb

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[78] Translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 13:142. For a further discussion of this passage, see Sections 5.1.1 and 8.2.3 below.

[79] Translation from Greer, *Theodore*, 279. Though originally composed in Greek, Theodore's comments on Eph 6:9 are only extant in Latin translation.

[80] Translation from Hill, *Theodoret*, 54.

[81] English glosses from LSJ 723.

θεραπεύω means “serve” and is frequently used to describe the service that a slave renders to a master.[82] In conclusion, Theodoret appears to interpret Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves, but he recoils from describing this service with language which suggests a complete reversal of roles.

3.2.8. Early Translations

The early translations of τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε preserve the ambiguity of the command. The Old Latin and Vulgate read *eadem facite illis* (do the same things to them).[83] The Syriac Peshitta reads ܗܟܢܐ ܥܒܕܘ ܠܥܒܕܝܟܘܢ (do ye so to your servants).[84] The Coptic Sahidic reads ⲁⲣⲓⲣⲉ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲥⲱⲧⲧⲏⲩⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲉⲓⲥⲉ (do ye also to them thus).[85] The Coptic Bohairic reads ⲁⲣⲓⲟⲩⲓ ⲛⲱⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲓⲣⲏϯ (do to them thus).[86] These translations offer little insight into the early interpretation of the command.

3.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined sixteen extant Greek citations of Col 4:1a and Eph 6:9a prior to 500 CE, as well as the Latin, Coptic, and Syriac translations of these commands. As

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[82] The verb θεραπεύω is glossed “serve” in *PGL* 645; LSJ 792; GE 935–36. For the use of θεραπεύω to describe the service rendered by a slave, see Plato *Euthyphr.* 13D; Philo *Moses* 2.22; Jos. *Ant.* 19.103; Plut. *Pomp.* 73.7; Epict. *Diatr.* 4.1.148. See also Greg. Nyssa *De inst. Chr.* 8.1.67.13–68.13, discussed in Section 5.1.1 below.

[83] The Old Latin translations read *ad eos* or *ad illos* instead of *illis*. For the text of the Old Latin and the Vulgate, see Hermann Josef Frede, *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel, Band 24.1: Epistulae ad Ephesios* (Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder, 1962), 272. Translation from Kinney, *Vulgate*, 6:1032–33.

[84] Syriac text from Aland and Juckel, *Das Neue Testament in Syrischer Überlieferung*, 324. Translation from Murdock, *The Syriac New Testament*, 358.

[85] Coptic text from Thompson, *Coptic Version*, 206. Translation from Horner, *Southern Dialect*, 5:254–55.

[86] Text and translation from Horner, *Northern Dialect*, 3:372–73.

noted above, this data has been almost entirely ignored in the modern scholarship on the *Haustafeln*. The results of my investigation are summarized in the table below. For citations or translations of Col 4:1, a "yes" indicates that the author appears to understand the verse as a command to treat slaves as equals, while a "no" indicates that he does not appear to hold this interpretation. Likewise, for citations or translations of Eph 6:9, a "yes" indicates that the author appears to understand Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves, while a "no" indicates that he does not appear to hold this interpretation. (As discussed in the analysis above, these judgements are made with varying degrees of confidence. For example, Chrysostom explicitly states that Eph 6:9 requires masters to serve slaves, but Clement's interpretation of Col 4:1 as a command to treat slaves as equals is less certain.) A question mark (?) indicates that the evidence is insufficient to determine the author or translator's interpretation of the verse. A dash (–) indicates that the passage does not appear in the source.

Table 3.1. The Interpretation of Colossians 4:1 and Ephesians 6:9 in the Early Church

Source	Colossians 4:1		Ephesians 6:9	
Clement of Alexandria	**Yes**	*Strom.* 4.65.3–4; cf. 5.30.3–5	**No**	*Paed.* 3.12.95.1
Origen	**Yes**	*Comm. Matt.* 16.8.106–190	**No**	*Frag. comm. Eph.* 32.2–4
	Yes	*Hom. Ps.* 7.2.1–71		
Peter of Alexandria	**?**	*Ep. Can.* 7.18–22	**?**	*Ep. Can.* 7.1–11
Basil the Great	**–**		**Yes**	*Reg. mor.* 31:856.33–54
Didymus the Blind	**?**	*Comm. Ps.* 59.7–8	**–**	
	Yes	*Comm. Eccl.* 223.4–5		
Severian of Gabala	**No**	*Fr. Col.* 328.12–14	**–**	
John Chrysostom	**No**	*Hom. Col.* 10 [62:368.14–18]	**Yes**	*Hom. Eph.* 22 [62.157.19–22]
Theodore of Mopsuestia	**No**	*Comm. Col.* 430.4–10	**No**	*Comm. Eph.* 278.27–28
Pseudo-Chrysostom	**Yes**	*In cent.* 61:769.47–69	**–**	
Theodoret of Cyrus	**No**	*Interp. epist.* 82:621.47–49	**Yes**	*Interp. epist.* 82:552.15–16
Old Latin and Vulgate	**No**		**?**	
Syriac Peshitta	**?**		**?**	
Coptic Sahidic	**?**		**?**	
Coptic Bohairic	**Yes**		**?**	

As shown in the table, both the interpretation of Col 4:1 as a command to treat slaves as equals and the interpretation of Eph 6:9 as a command to serve slaves are supported by a number of voices in the early church. The chart summarizes the views of ten Greek fathers. Some of these fathers do not cite one of the two passages (–), and some of the citations do not reveal a precise interpretation (?). Nevertheless, of the ten Greek fathers who cite Col 4:1 and/or Eph 6:9 prior to 500 CE, at least seven appear to support at least one of the interpretations which the majority of modern scholars have rejected as impossible. These results suggest that modern scholars have been too hasty in dismissing the peculiar language used in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9. In the following two chapters, I will examine this language in detail.

CHAPTER 4:
Equality in Colossians 4:1

As discussed in Chapter 2, most scholars insist that ἰσότης in Col 4:1 means fairness in a sense distinct from equality. David L. Balch, for example, claims that it is "misleading" to translate ἰσότης as "equality" in Col 4:1, and Gustav Stählin asserts that in this verse, ἰσότης "does not mean equality in any sense."[1] According to such scholars, τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε is a conventional exhortation which means, "Give to the slaves what is fair."[2] This interpretation of ἰσότης is so widely accepted that it is often assumed without comment by scholars discussing Col 4:1.[3] Nevertheless, Angela Standhartinger and a handful of others have challenged the consensus, arguing that ἰσότης "does not merely represent what is reasonable, but in fact means equality." According to these scholars, τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε is a radical statement that undermines the very notion of slavery.[4]

Despite the importance of this debate, however, the arguments on both sides are rather sparse. In this chapter, I provide a thorough analysis of the meaning of ἰσότης in Col 4:1.[5] The chapter is composed of three sections. In the first, I examine the use of ἰσότης in the context of slavery. In the second, I consider the assertion that ἰσότης often means fairness in a sense distinct from equality. In the third, I consider the claim that the context of Col 4:1 prohibits the interpretation of ἰσότης as equality.

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[1] Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists," 406–7; Stählin, *TDNT* 3:355. See Section 2.3.5 above.

[2] GE 989.

[3] See Section 2.6 above.

[4] Standhartinger, "Origin", esp. 128. See Section 2.3.5 above.

[5] This chapter is an expanded version of the argument I presented in "Grant Slaves Equality: Re-Examining the Translation of Colossians 4:1," *TynBul* 68.1 (2017): 59–71.

4.1. Ἰσότης in the Context of Slavery

In his commentary on Col 4:1, Douglass Moo asserts that ἰσότης "was used in secular Greek to refer to the appropriate treatment of slaves, in the sense of giving them what was 'due' them."[6] On the other hand, Standhartinger claims that ἰσότης "resonates primarily as a political programme against slavery" and "calls into question any distinction between those who are free and those who are not."[7] Neither Moo nor Standhartinger, however, offer much evidence to support these claims. Standhartinger cites only two passages, both from the same author, in which ἰσότης occurs in the context of slavery (Philo *Good Person* 79; *Spec. Laws* 2.68). Moo provides even less evidence. He cites only the entry in BDAG, and none of the occurrences of ἰσότης collected in this entry refer to the treatment of slaves.[8]

In this section, I offer a thorough examination of the use of ἰσότης in the context of slavery. I have limited my search to the non-Christian literature prior to 300 CE. Using the digital TLG corpus, I have examined every passage in which ἰσότης or ἀνισότης appears within 50 words of a term related to slavery.[9] (Fifty words is the largest gap permitted by the TLG search engine.) In addition to the passages which fall into these parameters, I have examined many other occurrences of ἰσότης throughout the extant literature. In contradiction to Moo's assertion, I find no instance in which ἰσότης is used "to refer to the appropriate treatment of slaves." On the other hand, I find fifteen passages in which ἰσότης is presented as incompatible

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[6] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 316–17.

[7] Standhartinger, "Origin," 128.

[8] BDAG 481. For an analysis of the evidence offered by BDAG, see Section 4.2 below.

[9] I searched for all passages in which the string ισοτη appears within 50 words of the string δουλ. Additionally, I searched for all passages in which the lexemes ἰσότης or ἀνισότης appear within 50 words of the following lexemes: οἰκέτης, δεσπότης, ἀνδράποδον, or θεράπων.

with slavery. Furthermore, significant parallels exist between the use of ἰσότης in these passages and the use of ἰσότης in Col 4:1.

(1) After claiming, "What is just [τό δίκαιον] is something that is equal [ἴσον]," and, "Friendship is based on equality [ἰσότητι]," Aristotle considers justice and friendship in the context of the household. He explains that a slave is merely "a tool of his master," and thus there can be no true friendship between master and slave.[10] On the other hand, various degrees of friendship may exist between father and son, husband and wife, and brothers. The friendship between brothers is based on "numerical equality" (τὸ ἴσον τὸ κατ᾽ ἀριθμὸν), while the friendship between father and son or husband and wife is based on "proportional equality" (τὸ ἴσον τὸ ἀναλογίαν; *Eth. eud.* 7.9.1–10.9 [1241B–42B; Rackham, LCL]). This distinction between numerical equality and proportional equality appears frequently throughout Greek political philosophy. In Section 4.2.1.3 below, I will examine this distinction in more detail and consider its significance for the interpretation of Col 4:1. At this point, however, it is sufficient to note that according to Aristotle, neither numerical equality nor proportional equality characterizes the master/slave relationship.

(2) In *Magna Moralia*, pseudo-Aristotle explains that while "men speak of a Justice [δίκαιόν] between slave and master, and between son and father," such justice is "identical only in name with social Justice [τῷ πολιτικῷ δικαίῳ]." This is because social justice "consists chiefly in equality [ἐν ἰσότητι]." Thus social justice cannot operate between father and son because a son is not "his father's equal and peer" (ἐν ἰσότητι καὶ ὁμοιότητί τῷ πατρί). Likewise, "Justice

[10] This is a common view. According to Plato, "Slaves will never be friends with masters" (*Leg.* 757A [Bury, LCL]). Often, a friend is contrasted with a slave. Cambyses speaks of men who came to ruin because they treated others "like slaves rather than as friends" (Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.45 [Miller, LCL]). Philo states, "Wisdom is rather God's friend than His servant [δοῦλον]" (*Sobriety* 55 [Colson, LCL]). Other examples include Eurip. Frag. 29; Xen. *Cyr.* 4.4.12; *Hier.* 6.3; Plut. *Ages.* 12.4; John 15:15.

[δίκαιον] does not operate between slave and master; for the slave is chattel of his lord." On the other hand, the type of justice that operates between a husband and a wife "approaches near to the social kind," because the wife "is more nearly his equal" (μετέχει ἰσότητός πως μᾶλλον) than the son or the slave (1.33.15–18 [Armstrong, LCL]). Again, this passage explicitly denies that slaves have ἰσότης with masters.

(3) Polybius explains that the Achaean league achieved success "by reserving no special privileges for original members, and putting all new adherents exactly on the same footing [ἴσα πάντα ποιοῦσα]." Polybius describes such policies as "sincerely democratic" and driven by "equality and humanity" (ἰσότητι καὶ φιλανθρωπίᾳ; 2.38.6–9 [Paton, LCL]).[11] Furthermore, he asserts that the league continually made war against those "who either themselves or through the kings attempted to enslave [καταδουλουμένους] their native cities" (2.42.3). Thus Polybius associates ἰσότης with a democratic political system characterized by equal rights and opposed to tyranny, described as slavery.

(4) Diodorus Siculus explains that the most admirable law of the Indians was the one which forbade anyone to be a slave but instead demanded, "All shall be free [ἐλευθέρους] and respect the principle of equality [τὴν ἰσότητα τιμᾶν] in all persons" (2.39.5 [Oldfather, LCL]). Diodorus thus associates ἰσότης with liberty and presents ἰσότης as incompatible with slavery.

(5) Diodorus Siculus recounts the legend that Zeus executed "robbers and impious men" and introduced "equality [τὴν ἰσότητα] and democracy." As part of this campaign, Zeus "slew the Giants" because they had "enslaved [καταδουλοῦσθαι] their neighbours" and violated "the

[11] Ἰσότης and φιλανθρωπία are used together in Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.295; see also Philo *Moses* 2.9; Ps-Chrys. *In cent.* 61:769.47–69. Ἰσότης and φιλανθρώπως are used together in Philo *Good Person* 84.

rules of justice [τοῦ δικαίου]" (5.71.2–5 [Oldfather, LCL]). Thus ἰσότης again appears in contrast to a policy of enslavement.[12]

(6) Philo explains that the Sabbath regulations allow the slave freedom from work and consequently require the master to temporarily "do the menial offices of the slave." This causes both master and slave to "remember equality [ἰσότητος]." Thus the condition of slavery is presented as obscuring the fundamental ἰσότης that exists between master and slave. Philo continues on to assert, "Servants are free [ἐλεύθεροι] by nature, no man being naturally a slave" (*Spec. Laws* 2.66–69 [Colson, LCL]).

(7) In a passage which echoes many popular motifs in Greco-Roman utopianism, Philo explains that the Essenes reject trade, private property, wealth, luxury, weapons, and slavery.[13] He describes their rejection of slavery as follows:

> Not a single slave is to be found among them, but all are free [ἐλεύθεροι], exchanging services with each other, and they denounce the owners of slaves, not merely for their injustice in outraging the law of equality [ὡς ἀδίκων, ἰσότητα λυμαινομένων], but also for their impiety in annulling the statute of Nature, who mother-like has born and reared all men alike, and created them genuine brothers, not in mere name, but in very reality, though this kinship has been put to confusion by the triumph of malignant covetousness [πλεονεξία], which has wrought estrangement instead of affinity and enmity instead of friendship. (*Good Person* 79 [Colson, LCL])

[12] On the contrast between ἰσότης and tyranny, described as slavery, see also Diod. Sic. 9.20.3 and 10.17.1.

[13] For utopian motifs, see Sen. Y. *Ep.* 90.36–45; [*Octavia*] 391–436; [*Einsiedeln Eclogues*] 2.23–34; Lucian *Sat.* 19–24; Ovid *Metam.* 1.89–150; *Am.* 3.8.35–56; Macrob. *Sat.* 1.8.3; Hesiod *W.D.* 109–26; Calpurnius Siculus *Eclogue* 1.42; Suet. *Tib.* 59; Plut. *Cim.* 10.7; Philo *Embassy* 13. See also the discussion in Section 4.3.1 below. On the association of luxury, greed, and injustice, see Mus. Ruf. 20.47–55. For a summary of Greco-Roman utopianism, see Eric J. Gilchrest, *Revelation 21–22 in Light of Jewish and Greco-Roman Utopianism* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 12–82. On utopian allusions in Jewish and Christian literature, see David L. Mealand, "Community of Goods and Utopian Allusions in Acts II–IV," *JTS* 28.1 (1977): 96–99, esp. 98.

In this passage, Philo clearly presents the enslavement of a fellow human as incompatible with ἰσότης.[14]

(8) Philo asserts that the Therapeutae, like the Essenes, reject slavery as being "entirely against nature." Philo then explains, "Nature has borne all men to be free [ἐλευθέρους], but the wrongful and covetous acts [αἱ ἀδικίαι καὶ πλεονεξίαι] of some who pursued that source of evil, inequality [ἀνισότητα], have imposed their yoke and invested the stronger with power over the weaker" (*Contempl. Life* 70–71 [Colson, LCL]). As in his description of the Essenes, Philo again asserts that slavery is an unnatural state that arose through πλεονεξία. Furthermore, just as Philo described slavery as an outrage against ἰσότης, in this passage he associates slavery with ἀνισότης, the antonym of ἰσότης.

(9) In an exposition of Joseph's dream concerning the sheaves, Philo contrasts "the honourer of equality" (ὁ ἰσότητα τιμῶν) with those who "bring into subjection even souls whose spirit is naturally free and unenslaved [ἐλεύθερα καὶ ἀδούλωτα]" (*Dreams* 2.78–80 [Colson, LCL]). Thus we see again the contrast between ἰσότης and enslavement. Philo makes a similar contrast when discussing this episode in his *Life of Joseph*. After Joseph reports his first dream, his brothers angrily respond, "Do you think that you will be our lord [κύριος] and king? For that is what you hint at in this lying vision." Later, after Joseph reports his second dream, even his father rebukes him. Jacob says, "The idea of hoping and eagerly expecting to gain dominion over your family is very odious in my judgement, and I think that all who care for equality and justice between kinsfolk must agree [ὅσοις ἰσότητος μέλει καὶ συγγενικῶν δικαίων]" (7–9 [Colson, LCL]).

[14] Josephus likewise claims that the Essenes do not "own slaves" because "they believe that the ... practice contributes to injustice [ἀδικίαν]" (*Ant.* 18:21 [Feldman, LCL]).

Note that ἰσότης in this latter passage is linked with δίκαιος. Another example of this construction is found in Plutarch. Plutarch explains that while attempting to negotiate an end to the Spartan domination of other Greek cities, Epaminondas insisted that "peace be made on terms of equality and justice [ἰσότητι καὶ τῷ δικαίῳ], for it would endure only when all parties to it were made equal [ἴσων ἁπάντων γενομένων]" (*Ages*. 27.4 [Perrin, LCL]). Here, as in Col 4:1, ἰσότης is collocated with δίκαιος.[15] Furthermore, these terms are used to describe a state in which all parties are "made equal."

(10) Philo uses ἰσότης in explaining the regulation concerning female captives in Deut 21:10–14.

> He [i.e. Moses] says, if you find among the booty a comely woman for whom you feel a desire, do not treat her as a captive, and vent your passion on her, but in a gentler spirit pity her for her change of lot and alleviate her misfortunes by changing her condition for the better in every way. ... Leave her alone for thirty days, and allow her without fear of disturbance to mourn and weep for her father and mother and the rest of her family, from whom she had been parted either through their death or because they are suffering the pains of slavery, which are worse than death. After this, live with her as your lawful wife, because holiness requires that she who is to enter a husband's bed, not as a hired harlot, trafficking her youthful bloom, but either for love of her mate or for the birth of children, should be admitted to the rights of full wedlock as her due. ... He [i.e. Moses] shows pity for the captive ... because bereft of her wedded mate, she is about to make trial of another, menaced too by the dread of a master [τὸν δεσποτικὸν φόβον], even if he deals with her as an equal [κἂν ἰσότητα ἐπιτηδεύῃ]; for the subject condition always fears the might of the superior even though it be tempered with gentleness [ἡμερώτερον]. And if anyone, having satisfied his desire to the full and surfeited therewith, is no longer minded to continue his association with the captive, the law imposes what is not so much a loss of property as an admonition and correction leading him to improve his ways. For it bids him not sell her, nor yet keep her as a slave, but grant her freedom. (*Virtues* 110–115 [Colson, LCL])[16]

[15]Another example of this construction is found in Theodoret of Cyrus. In his comments on Ezek 45:10–12, Theodoret states that the legislation was given to honor ἰσότητι καὶ τῷ δικαίῳ (*Interp. Ez.* 81:1237.6–7). For a translation of this passage, see Robert C. Hill, *Theodoret of Cyrus: Commentaries on the Prophets* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox, 2006), 2:274.

[16] For the association between ἥμερος and ἰσότης in Philo, see also *Spec. Laws* 1.295; *Rewards* 59. For the use of ἰσότης with ἐπιτηδεύω in Philo, see *Dreams* 2.40.

The status of the woman in this passage is somewhat ambiguous. She is called a "captive," but the man is forbidden to "treat her as a captive." The man is to live with her as his "lawful wife" and grant her "the rights of full wedlock," yet he is called her "master." She cannot be kept "as a slave," and her lot is contrasted with those of her family who are "suffering the pains of slavery." Nevertheless, sending her away involves granting "freedom." Because the woman's relationship with the man bears some similarities to the slave/master relationship, this passage is the closest I have found to a passage in which ἰσότης is used "to refer to the appropriate treatment of slaves."[17] Nevertheless, this passage contrasts the honorable man who "practices ἰσότητα" with the base man who keeps the woman "as a slave." Thus ἰσότης once again appears in contrast to the slave/master relationship.

Furthermore, ἰσότης is not used "in the sense of giving" the woman "what was 'due'" her.[18] Rather, as correctly expressed by the translator, Philo uses the term to describe the behavior of the man who, despite being in a position of authority over the woman, chooses to treat her as an equal. As demonstrated by the following passages, this use of ἰσότης is well attested in Philo.

- Philo states that a man of "high position" should not "show himself uplifted with boastful and insolent airs, but honour equality [ἰσότητα] and allow a frank exchange of speech [παρρησίας] to those of low estate" (*Spec. Laws* 4.74 [Colson, LCL]).[19]
- In a discussion of Deut 17:18, Philo explains that the king who writes out the laws will gain "a spirit of equality" (ἰσότητα) instead of "arrogance [ἀλαζονεία] and insolence" (*Spec. Laws* 4.165 [Colson, LCL]).

[17] Moo, *Letters*, 316–17.

[18] Moo, *Letters*, 316–17.

[19] For other passages which connect ἰσότης and παρρησία, see Polyb. 6.8.4–5; 6.8.4–5; Origen *Hom. Ps.* 7.2.20–25.

- Philo contrasts a wealthy man who lives extravagantly with a wise ruler who, despite being wealthy, lives frugally. The former is described as a "boastful" (κομπασταὶ) person who seeks a "high position" and is "puffed up by arrogance [ἀλαζονείας]." According to Philo, his extravagance is rooted in "arrogance [ἀλαζονείας] and intemperance." The wise ruler, on the other hand, has been trained from youth to "value the interest of the man before those of the ruler." This teaching reminds him of his "common humanity," draws him "away from lofty and overweening thought," and heals his "inequality with equality [ἰσότητι]" (*Spec. Laws* 2.18–21 [Colson, LCL]).
- In his retelling of Gen 45, Philo states that Joseph's brothers were amazed that Joseph never revealed "his own high lineage," but allowed the belief to persist "that he was of obscure and ignoble station" and "a slave by birth." Joseph's brothers continue to praise Joseph for "his fairness and kind behavior [ἰσότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ δεξιότητος], for they knew the arrogance and gross rudeness [ἀλαζονείας καὶ ἀπαιδευσίας] of other governors, and admired the absence of obtrusiveness and blustering [τὸ ἀνεπίφαντον καὶ ἀτραγῴδητον]" (*Joseph* 249 [Coslon, LCL]). Though the translator has glossed ἰσότης as "fairness" in this passage, the term is clearly used in the same way that it was used in the three previous passages. In addition to being contrasted again with ἀλαζονεία (braggadocio, posturing, boasting; pride), the term is also associated with ἀνεπίφαντος (unostentatious) and ἀτρᾰγῴδητος (absence of display or pomp).[20]

[20] English glosses for ἀλαζονεία, ἀνεπίφαντος, and ἀτρᾰγῴδητος from GE 81, GE 171, and LSJ 272, respectively. On the contrast between ἰσότης and ἀλαζονεία in Philo, see also *Spec. Laws* 1.265, 293–95; *Decalogue* 5; cf. *Moses* 1.328. Note that the only other time ἰσότης appears in *Life of Joseph* is in Jacob's rebuke of Joseph discussed above (*Joseph* 9). The words of Joseph's brothers thus vindicate Joseph from the accusation that he has neglected ἰσότης by seeking ascendency over his family.

In summary, Philo is using ἰσότης in all of these passages to describe a person in power who does not confuse his authority with superiority.[21]

(11) Plutarch explains that Solon "confirmed the liberties [ἐλευθερίαν] of the citizens" by cancelling debts, for "equality under the laws is of no avail [οὐδὲν ὄφελος νόμων ἰσότητα παρεχόντων]" if the poor are placed "in subjection [δουλεύουσι] to the rich" through debts (*Comp. Sol. Publ.* 3.1 [Perrin, LCL]). Once again, ἰσότης is associated with liberty and contrasted with enslavement. Furthermore, as in Col 4:1, ἰσότης is here the object of the verb παρέχω. Another example of this construction is found in Aspasius. Aspasius explains, "Love confers equality upon friends [τοῖς φίλοις ἰσότητα παρέχει]. For it is necessary that those who are really friends be equal" (*In eth. Nic. comm.* 158.22–159.1).[22] Here ἰσότης clearly means equality in the sense that one does not surpass the other. Elsewhere, Aspasius states, "Those who are really friends must be equal to one another, ... for love properly so called does not wish to be in a condition of superiority to the other" (178.25–27).[23]

(12) In another passage from Plutarch, we read that Hippo advocated for a redistribution of land, arguing that "liberty was based on equality" (ἐλευθερίας ἀρχὴν οὖσαν τὴν ἰσότητα), while slavery was based on poverty (*Dion* 37.5 [Perrin, LCL]). Thus economic ἰσότης is associated with liberty in contrast to slavery.

(13) In a dialogue by the satirist Lucian, Lycinus states that virtue is presented by the philosophers as a city whose inhabitants "live a calm and perfectly happy life with good

[21] So also Let. Aris. 262–63. Recall that Origen uses ἰσότης in the same way when critiquing the behavior of certain bishops (see Section 3.1.2.1).

[22] Translation from David Konstan, *Aspasius: On Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 1–4, 7–8,* ACA (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 159.

[23] Translation from Konstan, *Aspasius,* 179.

government, equality [ἰσότητι], freedom [ἐλευθερίᾳ], and the other blessings" (*Hermot.* 22 [Kilburn, LCL]). His interlocutor, Hermotimus, enthusiastically agrees. Hermotimus recounts in particular what an old man told him about this city. According to this man, "There were even many barbarians among the citizens, as well as slaves, cripples, dwarves, and paupers." In this city, no account was given to one's wealth, appearance, or ancestry. Anyone who possessed virtue "was a citizen there and then equal to them all [ἰσότιμον ἅπασι]; inferior or superior, noble or common, bond or free, simply did not exist and were not mentioned in the city" (24).[24] Thus ἰσότης is used to describe a city in which the distinction between slave and free is abolished.

(14) In his commentary on Aristotle, Aspasius explains that justice has several forms, including "civic and paternal justice and that of the slavemaster." Of these three, civic justice is the "most just [δίκαιόν]" because "it accords with the equality [ἰσότητα] of the partners" (*In eth. Nic. comm.* 160.11–14).[25] The implication, of course, is that the father/son and master/slave relationships are not characterized by ἰσότης.

(15) Aspasius states, "There is what is just according to equality [δίκαιον τὸ κατ' ἰσότητά] and what is just according to superiority." The latter category includes "the justice of a father toward a son and of a master toward a slave and of a husband toward a wife and in general of one who rules toward one who is ruled" (*In eth. Nic. comm.* 176.8–10).[26] Once again, the master/slave relationship is presented as a relationship which is not characterized by ἰσότης.

In summary, ἰσότης is never used to describe the proper treatment of slaves but is instead consistently contrasted with slavery. Furthermore, in addition to using both ἰσότης and slavery

[24] Cf. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11.

[25] Translation from Konstan, *Aspasius*, 160.

[26] Translation from Konstan, *Aspasius*, 176–77.

language, many of the fifteen passages surveyed above contain other parallels with Col 4:1. In four passages, ἰσότης is discussed in the specific context of household relationships (passages 1; 2; 14; 15). In one passage, ἰσότης is the object of the verb παρέχω (passage 11).[27] In seven passages, ἰσότης is associated with δίκαιος (passages 1; 2; 5; 14; 15) or contrasted with ἄδικος/ ἀδικία (passages 7, 8). Finally, note that the use of ἰσότης in these fifteen passages is not idiosyncratic, but accords with the use of the term throughout the extant Greek literature. First, ἰσότης often appears as the object of the verb τιμάω (cf. passages 4; 9).[28] Second, ἰσότης is often contrasted with πλεονεξία (cf. passages 7; 8).[29] Third, ἰσότης is often associated with friendship (cf. passage 1).[30] Fourth, ἰσότης is often associated with democracy (cf. passages 3; 5).[31] Fifth, ἰσότης is often contrasted with tyrannical rule (cf. passages 3; 5).[32] Sixth, ἰσότης is often

[27] So also Aspasius *In eth. Nic. comm.* 158.22–159.1.

[28] So Eurip. *Phoen.* 536; Menander *Monost.* 362; Philo *Confusion* 108; *Moses* 1.328; 2.9 [τιμητέος]; *Spec. Laws* 2.204; 4.74, 166, 169, 235; Mus. Ruf. 4.83 [4.7]; Plut. *Frat. amor.* 6 [*Mor.* 481A]; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 17.9; Ael. Arist. *Def. Four* 125.26 [*Or.* 3]; Theodoret *Interp. Ez.* 81:1237.6–7. For a translation of Aelius Aristides, see Charles A. Behr, *P. Aelius Aristides: The Complete Works: Volume I. Orations I–XVI* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 38.

[29] So Isoc. *Or.* 7.60; Polyb. 6.8.4–5; Menander *Monost.* 259; *Monost.* 672; Philo *Spec. Laws* 2.190; *QE* 2.64 [ἀνισότης δὲ καὶ πλεονεξία]; Mus. Ruf. 4.83 [4.7]; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 17.9; Plut. *Lyc.* 24.4; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 5.5.30.4.

[30] So Eurip. *Phoen.* 535; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 17.9; Diog. Laert. 5.1.31; 8.1.10, 33; Max. Tyre 14.7.8; Aspasius *In eth. Nic. comm.* 158.22–159.1.

[31] So Isoc. *Or.* 3.15; *Or.* 7.60–61; Arist. *Pol.* 4.4.2 [1291B.31–37]; 5.1.7–9 [1301B.31–1302A.16]; Diod. Sic. 20.79.3; Philo *Confusion* 108; Plut. *Them*. 22.3; *Quaest. conv*. 8.2.2 [*Mor*. 719B–C]; Aspasius *In eth. Nic. comm.* 178.19–25.

[32] So Eurip. *Phoen.* 506–36 [quoted in Cic. *Att.* 134.1; Plut. *Frat. amor.* 6 [*Mor.* 481A]; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 17.9 (*Avar.*)]; Diod. Sic. 10.17.1; Plut. *Them*. 22.3; Diog. Laert. 8.2.72; Ael. Arist. *Panath.* 175.27–176.4 [*Or*. 1.306].

associated with ἐλευθερία (cf. passages 4; 6; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13).[33] Seventh, ἰσότης is often associated with δίκαιος or related terms (cf. passages 1; 2; 5; 7; 8; 14; 15).[34]

4.2. Ἰσότης as Fairness instead of Equality

In the previous section, I examined the use of ἰσότης in the context of slavery. While I found no instance in which ἰσότης was used to refer to the fair treatment of slaves, I found ample evidence that ἰσότης was understood as fundamentally incompatible with slavery. This is enough to cast serious doubt on the assertion that τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε would have been heard in the first century as a conventional command to treat slaves fairly. In this section, however, I will push the argument further. In the previous section, I challenged the notion that ἰσότης was used to refer to the fair treatment of slaves; in this section, I challenge the notion that the word ἰσότης *ever* means fairness in a sense distinct from equality. I begin by critiquing the method that has been used to establish such a meaning. I then reexamine the passages which are purported to illustrate this meaning.

4.2.1. A Critique of the Method

The arguments offered in support of the majority interpretation of Col 4:1 involve a number of fallacies that are widely recognized in the field of lexical semantics. These may be summarized as follows: (1) deriving the meaning of one word from another word, (2) determining the meaning of a word from a translational gloss, (3) transferring the meaning conveyed by the context to the word, and (4) divorcing the meaning of the word from the context.

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[33] So Arist. *Pol.* 4.4.2 [1291B.31–37]; Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 11.59.2–3; Plut. *Them*. 27.3.

[34] So Eurip. *Phoen.* 506; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 17.9; Philo *Joseph* 7–9; *Moses* 1.328; Plut. *Ages*. 27.4; Ael. Arist. *Panath.* 175.27–176.4 [*Or.* 1.306]; Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 11.59.2–3.

4.2.1.1. Determining the Meaning of One Word from Another Word

The most developed statement of the majority view is found in Stählin's article for the *TDNT*. The articles which compose the *TDNT* are not devoted to a single word, but instead to a family of cognates. Thus Stählin's discussion of ἰσότης appears in an article entitled, "ἴσος, ἰσότης, ἰσότιμος."[35] In his influential critique of the *TDNT,* James Barr argues that this organization "is an invitation to etymologizing interpretation."[36] As an example, Barr cites the discussion of λόγος by Hermann Kleinknecht. Kleinknecht asserts, "As substantive to λέγω, λόγος according to its basic meaning is 'gathering, collecting.'"[37] However, as Barr points out, the text which Kleinknecht offers as evidence for this claim (Homer *Od.* 24.107–108) does not include the noun λόγος; it only includes the verb λέγω. Kleinknecht evidently "does not notice the fact that the sense 'gathering' for λόγος appears to be unknown."[38]

The same error is made by Stählin in his article on ἰσότης. Stählin cites several passages from the extant Greek literature to support his claim that ἰσότης developed the meaning of equity as distinct from equality. However, most of the texts which he cites do not include the word ἰσότης. Instead, they include the cognate ἴσος (or ἄνισος).[39] For example, Stählin cites the

[35] Stählin, *TDNT* 3:343–55

[36] James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 236.

[37] Debrunner et al., "λέγω, λόγος, ῥῆμα, λαλέω," *TDNT* 4:69–136, esp. 77. English translation from Barr, *Semantics*, 236.

[38] Barr, *Semantics*, 236. See also Todd L. Price, *Structural Lexicology and the Greek New Testament: Applying Corpus Linguistics for Word Sense Possibility Delimitation Using Collocational Indicators*, PLAL 6 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2015), 164.

[39] Xen. *Cyr.* 2.2.18; Plato *Leg.* 12.957C; Polyb. 25.15.3; Inscr. Priene 61.9F; Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 7.12.69.1; Arist. *Eth. nic.* 5.1 [1129A.1–1230A.13] (esp. 5.1.8 [1129A.31–B.1]; 5.1.10–11 [1129B.6–11]); Demosth. *Ep. Philip* 9 [*Or.* 12]; *Navy* 3 [*Or.* 14]; *Fals. Leg.* 15 [*Or.* 19]; *Mid.* 67 [*Or.* 21]; *OGIS* 1.339.51. Cited in Stählin, *TDNT* 3:354–55.

following line from Polybius: "They begged the legates themselves to act as fair and just [ἴσους καὶ δικαίους] judges in the matter" (25.15.3 [Paton, LCL]).[40] Likewise, two of the three passages which Balch cites to support his interpretation of ἰσότης only include cognates (ἐξισόω, ἄνισος, and ἴσος).[41] As Barr emphasizes, the meaning of a word "has to be determined from the current usage."[42] Thus much of the evidence accumulated by Stählin and others is largely irrelevant. To be sure, the words ἴσος and ἰσότης are closely related, but it does not follow that these words have precisely the same range of meaning.

4.2.1.2. Determining the Meaning of a Word from a Translational Gloss

Matthew Brook O'Donnell finds a tendency among some NT scholars "to assess meaning on the basis of translational glosses."[43] Stanley Porter likewise writes, "I suspect that there is often more exegesis of the English word than of the Greek."[44] The danger of such an approach

[40] When ἴσος and δίκαιος in the same case and number are connected by the conjunction καί, ἴσος is usually placed first. Using the TLG search engine, I find only two instances in the literature prior to 300 CE in which δίκαιος appears first (Plut. *Ages*. 28.1; Diog. Laert. 1.67). On the other hand, I find 19 instances in which ἴσος appears first (Demosth. *Navy* 3 [*Or*. 14]; *Treaty* 1 [*Or.* 17]; *Fals. Leg.* 15 [*Or.* 19]; *Mid.* 67 [*Or.* 21]; Arist. *Pol.* 6.2.14 [1318B.1–5; 2x]; Polyb. 24.15.3; Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 7.66.5; Plut. *Cor.* 30.8; *Tim.* 23.2; *Eum.* 5.8; *Ages.* 39.3; *Arat.* 27.2; *Statecraft* 18 [*Mor*. 814E]; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 1.35; Ael. Arist. *Def. Or.* 48.12 [*Or*. 2]; Clem. Alex. *Exc.* 3.56.2; Diog. Laert. 8.18; Iambl. *Nic. arith. intr.* 81.20). I do not include Arist. *Eth. nic.* 5.6.5 [1134B.2] (εἰ δὲ τοῦ δικαίου, καὶ τοῦ ἴσου), since δίκαιος is in the protasis and ἴσος is in the apodosis.

[41] Philo *Decalogue* 167; Iambl. *V.P.* 18.80. Cited in Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists," 406–7. Note also that no distinction is made between ἴσος and ἰσότης in Gielen, *Tradition*, 167.

[42] Barr, *Semantics*, 107.

[43] Matthew Brook O'Donnell, *Corpus Linguistics and the Greek of the New Testament*, New Testament Monographs 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 327. See also Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament*, SBLRBS 25 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 59.

[44] Stanley E. Porter, "Linguistic Issues in New Testament Lexicography," in *Studies in the Greek New Testament: Theory and Practice*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, SBG 6 (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 49–74, esp. 52.

for the interpretation of Col 4:1 can be illustrated by the use of ἰσότης in a certain discourse from Plutarch's *Table-Talk*. In this discourse, Hagias and Lamprias debate the ancient custom of dividing the food at a banquet into equal portions. Hagias objects to the practice, arguing that the hungry man should be allowed to get more food than the man with a small appetite. As Hagias explains, "The distribution of equal portions to men who are actually unequal in their capacities" is "most unjust" (*Quaest. conv.* 2.10.1 [*Mor*. 643.B; Hoffleit, LCL]). Lamprias, however, defends the custom, arguing that allowing each guest to take as much food as they please has led to "suspicion, grabbing, snatching, and elbowing." He asserts that in the past, before "the custom of an equal share for all was abandoned," this sort of behavior was never found. "Nothing unseemly or unbecoming a gentleman could be seen so long as the goddesses Portion and Lot presided with equity [ἰσότητι] over dinners and drinking-parties" (*Quaest. conv.* 2.10.2 [*Mor*. 644.A–B]). A few lines later, Lamprias concludes his argument with these words:

> So let us stop dishonouring the goddesses of Portion, and 'Lot, child of Luck' as Euripides calls him, for he gives pre-eminence neither to wealth nor to glory, but, as he chances to fall, now this way, now that, he makes proud the poor and humble man, exciting him with a taste of independence, while the rich and great he accustoms to bearing equal treatment [ἰσότητι] without ill-temper and so teaches them self-control without giving offence. (*Quaest. conv.* 2.10.2 [*Mor*. 644.D])[45]

In both occurrences, Lamprias uses the term ἰσότης to describe the way in which Portion and Lot preside over mankind. However, while the translator glosses the second occurrence of ἰσότης as "equal treatment," he glosses the first occurrence as "equity." Since the practice of giving each guest an equal portion is indeed equitable, the translation "equity" is perfectly appropriate. Suppose, however, that one were to extract the glosses "equity" and "equal treatment" from this translation and list them in a lexicon as two distinct meanings of ἰσότης.

[45] On the equal distribution of food to rich and poor alike, see Lucian *Sat*. 17.

The user would then be led to believe that ἰσότης could mean "equity" in a sense distinct from "equal treatment." In other words, the user would be led to believe that ἰσότης could be used in one sense to refer to an equal distribution, but could also be used in another sense to refer to a distribution that was proportioned by merit, rank, or need. This would of course be an unjustified conclusion. A distribution proportioned by merit, rank, or need is precisely what Lamprias is arguing against! According to Lamprias, such a distribution would be contrary to ἰσότης.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that this passage demonstrates that ἰσότης never means equity in a sense distinct from equality. I am simply pointing out that this passage provides no evidence for such a meaning. The fact that the translator has chosen to gloss ἰσότης in this context as "equity" provides no justification for equating the meaning of the Greek word ἰσότης with the English word "equity." In some contexts, it may indeed be appropriate to gloss ἰσότης with the word "equity," but this does not mean that these two words have precisely the same range of meaning.

Consider Figure 4.1 below. In category A are those passages in which ἰσότης is appropriately rendered with the gloss "equality" but not the gloss "equity." An example of such a passage would be Philo's reference to "the equality [τῆς ἰσότητος] of length in the days and nights" during the autumnal and vernal equinoxes (*Spec. Laws* 4.233). In category B are those passages in which ἰσότης is appropriately rendered with either the gloss "equity" or the gloss "equality." The discourse from Plutarch discussed above is an example. Finally, in category C are those passages in which ἰσότης is appropriately rendered with the gloss "equity" but not the gloss "equality." The majority of scholars insist that Col 4:1 belongs in this category.

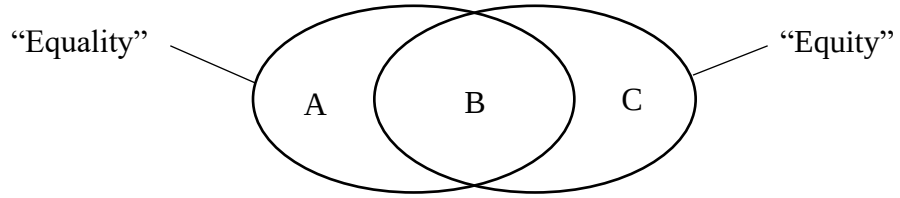

Figure 4.1. The Relationship Between “Equality” and “Equity” as Glosses for ἰσότης

This diagram is not intended to suggest that the appropriate glosses for ἰσότης are limited to “equality” and “equity.” Depending on the context, ἰσότης may be adequately rendered with any number of glosses.[46] The point of the diagram is simply to illustrate the distinction between a passage in which ἰσότης can be glossed as “equity” and a passage in which ἰσότης means equity in a sense distinct from equality. If scholars seek to demonstrate that the meaning which they propose for ἰσότης in Col 4:1 is attested elsewhere in the extant Greek literature, then they must do more than produce passages from category B. They must produce passages from category C.

The failure to distinguish between category B and category C is particularly evident in Stählin’s assessment of the following passage in Philo. Stählin cites this passage in the midst of his argument that ἰσότης in Col 4:1 “does not mean equality in any sense” but instead refers to “what is equitable.”

> Not a single slave is to be found among them [i.e. the Essenes], but all are free, exchanging services with each other, and they denounce the owners of slaves, not merely for their injustice in outraging the law of equality [οὐ μόνον ὡς ἀδίκων ἰσότητα λυμαινομένων], but also for their impiety in annulling the statute of Nature, who mother-like has born and reared all men alike, and created them genuine brothers, not in mere name, but in very reality, though this kinship has been put to confusion by the triumph of malignant covetousness, which has wrought estrangement instead of affinity and enmity instead of friendship. (*Good Person* 79 [Colson, LCL])

[46] For example, “equal treatment” (Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 2.10.2 [*Mor*. 644.D; Hoffleit, LCL]); “law of equality” (Philo *Good Person* 79 [Colson, LCL]); “principle of equality” (Diod. Sic. 2.39.5 [Oldfather, LCL]); etc.

Concerning the phrase, ἰσότητα λυμαινομένων, Stählin asserts, "This means, of course, 'mocking all equity.'"[47] Because a policy that treats all people as equals is indeed equitable, Stählin's translation is not inappropriate. However, Philo is clearly asserting an ontological equality between master and slave. Masters outrage ἰσότης, not by being harsh or unfair, but by being masters. It is the owning of slaves, not merely their mistreatment, which Philo identifies as offending the principle of ἰσότης.[48] Thus this passage hardly constitutes evidence that ἰσότης in Col 4:1 means equity in a sense distinct from equality. In terms of the diagram above, this passage falls into category B, not category C.

4.2.1.3. Transferring the Meaning Conveyed by the Context to the Word

In addition to warning against "etymologizing interpretations" (see section 4.2.1.1 above), Barr also warns against confusing the meaning contributed by the context of a word with the meaning contributed by that word. Barr distinguishes two ways in which such a confusion often occurs in biblical scholarship. The first he calls "illegitimate identity transfer." As an example, Barr considers the assertion that דָּבָר means "historical event." Barr argues that while דָּבָר may indeed "be used of a matter or thing which is in fact a historical event" (as in 2 Kings 15:11), it does not follow "that *dabar* means 'event' or 'history' or the like."[49] In order to demonstrate that דָּבָר means "historical event," one would have to provide examples in which this meaning is conveyed by the word דָּבָר, not "by the context in which it is used."[50]

[47] Stählin, *TDNT* 3:355.

[48] See discussion of this passage in Section 4.1 above and Section 4.3.1 below.

[49] Barr, *Semantics*, 217–18. See also Price, *Structural Lexicology*, 80.

[50] Barr, *Semantics*, 130–32.

This critical distinction is widely recognized in the field of lexical semantics. Moisés Silva explains that "when scholars suggest new meanings" for a word, they must produce "instances in which the meaning proposed is clearly conveyed only by the word in question." This is the "crucial test."[51] William Croft and D. Alan Cruse likewise distinguish between discrete senses and mere "contextual modulations." The latter "do not require the construal of distinct autonomous pre-meanings as part of the total construal process. The specifying features of different contextual modulations are, as it were, contributed by the context, not selected, or their creation triggered, by context."[52] As an example, they offer the following two sentences:

1. My best friend married my brother.
2. My best friend married my sister.

In (1) the word "friend" refers to a female, while in (2) the word "friend" refers to a male. The distinction between male and female, however, is contributed solely by the context.[53]

In his critique of the *TDNT*, Barr identifies another error similar to "illegitimate identity transfer" which he terms "illegitimate totality transfer."[54] In this approach, "The value of the context comes to be seen as something contributed by the word, and then it is read into the word as its contribution where the context is in fact different. Thus the word becomes overloaded with interpretive suggestion."[55] Consider, for example, Ethelbert Stauffer's claim: "Johannine ἀγάπη is quite explicitly condescending love, or rather a heavenly reality which in some sense descends

[51] Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 199–200.

[52] William Croft and D. Alan Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 140.

[53] Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 127–28.

[54] Barr, *Semantics*, 218.

[55] Barr, *Semantics*, 233–34.

from stage to stage into this word."[56] Now in passages such as John 3:16, the word ἀγάπη is certainly used to refer to God's condescending love. However, the notion of divine condescension in such passages is conveyed by the context, not by the word ἀγάπη. As demonstrated by the use of ἀγάπη in passages such as John 3:19 and 12:43, the term itself does not indicate some higher form of love.[57] Once again, this error identified by Barr is widely recognized by other scholars in the field of lexical semantics. Eugene A. Nida and Johannes P. Louw, for example, warn against "the serious mistake of reading into the meaning of specific words all the features of meaning found in all the contexts in which such a word occurs."[58]

In summary, one must be careful to distinguish between the meaning conveyed by a particular combination of words (i.e. עַל־סֵפֶר דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל [2 Kings 15:11] or ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον [John 3:16]) and the meaning conveyed by an individual word (i.e. דָּבָר or ἀγαπάω). Scholars who argue that ἰσότης had developed the meaning of equity in a sense distinct from equality appeal to ancient discussions of proportional or geometric ἰσότης. However, as I will demonstrate below, this argument overloads ἰσότης with meanings which are never actually conveyed by the word itself.

In a discussion of "all the forms of equality" (πάσας τὰς ἰσότητος ἰδέας; *Heir* 146 [Colson, LCL]), Philo draws a distinction between numerical equality and proportional equality:

> One essential form of equality [ἰσότητος] is the proportional [ἡ διὰ ἀναλογίας], in which the few are regarded as equal to the many, and the small to the greater. This is often employed by states on special occasions when they order each citizen to make an equal contribution from his property, not of course numerically equal, but equal in the sense that

[56] Ethelbert Stauffer, "ἀγαπάω, ἀγάπη, ἀγαπητός" *TDNT* 1:21–55, esp. 53.

[57] This specific example is taken from Max Turner, "Modern Linguistics and the New Testament," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 146–74, esp. 154. See also Barr, *Semantics*, 219–20.

[58] Louw and Nida, *Lexical Semantics*, 59.

> it is proportionate to the valuation of his estate, so that one who had paid 100 drachmas might be considered to have given a sum equal to one who paid a talent. (*Heir* 145)

Later in the same work, Philo again distinguishes "numerical equality" (τῆς κατ᾽ ἀριθμὸν ἰσότητος) from "proportioned equality" (τῆς κατ᾽ ἀναλογίαν ἰσότητος; *Heir* 192–95). The former is found in Num 7:10–88, where twelve leaders from the tribes of Israel each offer identical gifts of gold, silver, and livestock. The latter is found in Num 35:8, where each tribe gives a different number of cities to the Levites in proportion to the size of the tribe (i.e. the smaller tribes give fewer cities; the larger tribes give more cities). Elsewhere, Philo discusses proportional equality in the context of wages:

> For if sailors on merchant vessels were remunerated equally with the pilots, or oarsmen and marines on men-of-war with captains and admirals, or cavalry soldiers in armies with their commanders, or rank and file with their officers, or regimental captains with generals, or in cities litigants with judges, councillors with their chairmen, or in general private individuals with rulers, disturbances and factions would arise and the nominal equality would engender an actual inequality [ἡ διὰ λόγων ἰσότης τὴν δι᾽ ἔργων ἀνισότητα γεννήσει]. For like pay for unlike worth is inequality, and inequality is the fountain of evil. (*Spec. Laws* 1.121 [Colson, LCL]) [59]

In summary, both a small payment and a large payment may be considered equal if taxation is according to income or assets. Likewise, both a small salary and a large salary may be considered equal if compensation is according to experience, skill, or seniority. Thus in certain circumstances, true ἰσότης is at variance with the notion that every person should give or receive exactly the same amount.

This distinction between numerical ἰσότης and proportional ἰσότης is certainly not unique to Philo, but is found throughout Greek literature.[60] Plato states, "There are two kinds of equality [ἰσοτήτοιν] which, though identical in name, are often almost opposites in their practical results."

[59] See also Philo *Cherubim* 105.

[60] On the history of this distinction in Greek philosophy, see F. D. Harvey, "Two Kinds of Equality," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 26 (1965): 101–46.

The first employs "the lot to give even results in the distributions," while the second "dispenses more to the greater and less to the smaller," giving greater honor "to those that are greater in goodness." As Plato explains, "It is precisely this [second kind of equality] which constitutes for us 'political justice [τὸ δίκαιον]'" (*Leg.* 757B–C [Bury, LCL]).[61] Aristotle makes the same distinction: "Equality [τὸ ἴσον] is of two kinds, numerical equality and equality according to worth—by numerically equal I mean that which is the same and equal in number or dimension, by equal according to worth that which is equal by proportion." Like Plato, Aristotle associates proportional equality with justice: "Men agree that the absolutely just [δίκαιον] is what is according to worth" (*Pol.* 5.1.7 [1301B.31–37; Rackham, LCL]). Isocrates likewise discusses "the two recognized kinds of equality [ἰσοτήτοιν]." One "makes the same award to all alike" and is rightly rejected "as unjust" (οὐ δικαίαν οὖσαν). The other "gives to each man his due" (*Or.* 7.21–22 [Norlin, LCL]).[62] Again, the same distinction is found in Plutarch:

> The arithmetical distributes an equal amount to each, measuring by number, whereas the geometric distributes to each an amount corresponding to his worth, measuring by proportion. It does not mix everything together, but has within it a clear principle of distinction between good and bad; people receive their due not as the balance or the lot directs, but always by the distinction of good and bad in them. ... It is given the names of justice and retribution, and teaches us to consider justice equal (fair) [ἴσον] but not to consider equality [τὸ ἴσον] justice. The equality [ἰσότητα] which the mob seeks, which is in reality the greatest injustice of all, God roots out, as far as is feasible; and he maintains distinction by worth, setting the proportionate relation, in geometrical fashion, as the standard of lawfulness. (*Quaest. conv.* 8.2.2 [*Mor*. 719B–C; Minar, LCL])

Similar passages are scattered throughout the extant literature.[63]

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[61] See also Plato *Gorg*. 508A.

[62] See also Isoc. *Or.* 3.14–16.

[63] So Arist. *Eth. eud.* 7.9.5–6 [1241B.34–41]; *Eth. nic.* 5.3 [1131A.10–B.24]. Democracy was frequently associated with numerical or arithmetical equality: Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 8.2.2 [*Mor*. 719B–C]; Arist. *Pol.* 5.1.7–9 [1301B.31–1302A.16]; Aspasius *In eth. Nic. comm.* 178.19–25.

For Balch, the argument that ἰσότης in Col 4:1 means equity in a sense distinct from equality is ultimately grounded in this distinction between numerical and proportional equality. Citing this distinction, Balch concludes, "'Equality' had several meanings in the Peripatetic and Neophythagorean tradition."[64] Stählin also seems to have the discussions of numerical and proportional equality in mind when he claims that "the definition [of ἰσότης] is filled out or corrected" such that it comes to entail "not what is equal, but what is proper."[65]

However, the passages cited above do not demonstrate a change in the "definition" of the word ἰσότης, nor do they demonstrate that ἰσότης had "several meanings." Consider the following English passage from the British philosopher John Stuart Mill:

> For what reason ought equality to be the rule in matters of taxation? For the reason, that it ought to be so in all affairs of government. ... Equality of taxation, therefore, as a maxim of politics, means equality of sacrifice. It means apportioning the contribution of each person towards the expenses of government, so that he shall feel neither more nor less inconvenience from his share of the payment than every other person experiences from his.[66]

Note that Mill is expressing precisely the same distinction expressed above by Philo when he asserted that 100 drachmas might be considered equal to one talent. Are we therefore justified in inferring that the "definition" of the English word "equality" is "filled out or corrected" such that it comes to entail "not what is equal, but what is proper"? Certainly not. The fact that scholars insist on translating ἰσότης as "fairness" instead of "equality" in Col 4:1 demonstrates that there remains an important distinction between these two English words. In the passage cited above, the word "equality" still means the condition in which two or more quantities are equal. The

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[64] Balch, "Neopythagorean Moralists," 388, 406–7.

[65] Stählin, *TDNT* 3:347–354. So also Schweizer, *Kolosser*, 168–69.

[66] John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy*, ed. W. J. Ashley (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 804.

context simply specifies that those quantities are not the monetary values of the contributions but rather the percentages of property represented by the contributions.

Note that in his discussion of "all the forms of equality" (πάσας τὰς ἰσότητος ἰδέας; *Heir* 146 [Colson, LCL]), Philo does not limit himself to "proportioned equality" (τῆς κατ᾽ ἀναλογίαν ἰσότητος; 192; cf. 145) and "numerical equality" (τῆς κατ᾽ ἀριθμὸν ἰσότητος; 195; cf. 144). Philo also identifies "equality of magnitude" (ἰσότητος τῆς κατὰ τὸ μέγεθος; 150; cf. 144), which applies to dimensions, and "equality in force" (τὰ ἴσα δυνάμει; 151; cf. 144), which applies to weights. Just as a contribution of 100 drachmas and a contribution of one talent may have ἰσότης according to proportion but not number, so also a block of wood and a block of lead may have ἰσότης according to magnitude (i.e. size) but not force (i.e. weight). This does not mean that the word ἰσότης has two more distinct meanings: "equality of size" and "equality of weight." The distinction between size and weight is conveyed solely by the context.

In summary, Balch and others have identified passages in which Greek philosophers discuss the correct way to apply ἰσότης in government, and then read the distinctions made in these discussions back into the meaning of the word ἰσότης. This is illegitimate. Now it is of course possible that the notion of proportional equality was so prominent that the word ἰσότης came to mean equity without equality. However, in order to demonstrate that this did indeed occur, one would need to pass Silva's "crucial test." That is, one would need to produce "instances in which the meaning proposed is clearly conveyed only by the word in question."[67] As I will demonstrate in Section 4.2.2 below, no such passage has been produced.

[67] Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*, 199–200.

4.2.1.4. Divorcing the Meaning of the Word from the Context

Up to this point, I have only considered the type of evidence that one would need to produce in order to demonstrate that ἰσότης means not only equality, but also fairness in a sense distinct from equality. However, even if one were to produce passages in which ἰσότης means equity without equality (region C in Figure 4.1 above), one would still have to demonstrate that this is the meaning the word has in Col 4:1. For example, the word "knife" means both a piece of cutlery and a weapon, but when the word "knife" is collocated with the words "spoon" and "fork," it usually has the former meaning. Likewise, when the word "knife" appears in a prepositional phrase modifying a verb such as "stab" or "attack," it usually means weapon.[68]

As O'Donnell complains, "The standard lexicon entry consists of a list … of the uses of a word extracted from their contexts and grouped together. This gives the user the impression that ... virtually any of these senses can be drawn upon by an author in any context."[69] Porter likewise observes,

> The fact that the meanings [listed in a lexicon] are extrapolated from actual contexts is often forgotten. These contexts are often virtually obliterated in the lexicon and consequently often overlooked by its users, who treat the translational equivalents as a smorgasbord of meanings to sample, selecting the one that is most palatable.[70]

When readers of Col 4:1 open a lexicon such as BDAG, they find two available glosses for ἰσότης: "equality" and "fairness."[71] Since most modern readers find the notion of equality

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[68] For a discussion on why these two distinct senses of "knife" are not merely contextual modulations, see Croft and Cruse, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 126–31.

[69] O'Donnell, *Corpus Linguistics*, 321.

[70] Porter, "Linguistic Issues in New Testament Lexicography," 53. In a recent study, Todd L. Price demonstrates that attending to collocations, colligations, and semantic preferences can assist the exegete in determining "which of the possible senses [of the word] are more likely than others to be correct in a given context" [*Structural Lexicology*, 70].

[71] BDAG 481.

incompatible with the relationship described in the *Haustafel*, they select the second meaning. However, even if BDAG is correct to present ἰσότης as a polyseme meaning either equality or fairness, we are not free to simply select whichever of these two meanings "is most palatable." We must first consider whether or not ἰσότης is more likely to have one meaning or the other when the term is collocated with δίκαιος or used as the object of the verb παρέχω. Recall that in Section 4.1 above, I produced a number of examples in which ἰσότης means equality when collocated with δίκαιος (Philo *Joseph* 9; Plut. *Ages*. 27.4) or when appearing as the object of the verb παρέχω (Plut. *Comp. Sol. Publ.* 3.1; Aspasius *In eth. Nic. comm.* 158.22–159.1). I can find no such examples in which ἰσότης means something other than equality.

4.2.2. A Reappraisal of the Evidence

As noted in Section 4.2.1.1 above, many of the passages cited in support of the majority view do not even contain the word ἰσότης. When we remove these passages, we are left with a relatively small set of passages which are purported to attest the use of ἰσότης as fairness in a sense distinct from equality. In this section, I will examine each of these passages and argue that none of them support the majority interpretation of Col 4:1.

(1) In a passage which was discussed above in Section 4.1, Polybius uses ἰσότης to describe the policy of the Achaean league:

> One could not find a political system and principle so favorable to equality and freedom of speech [ἰσηγορίας καὶ παρρησίας], in a word so sincerely democratic, as that of the Achaean league. … For by reserving no special privileges for original members, and putting all new adherents exactly on the same footing [ἴσα πάντα ποιοῦσα], it soon attained the aim it had set itself, being aided by two very powerful coadjutors, equality and humanity [ἰσότητι καὶ φιλανθρωπίᾳ]. (2.38.6–9 [Paton, LCL])[72]

[72] Cited in BDAG 481; LSJ 840; GE 989.

As noted in Section 4.1, the policy which Polybius describes here is later contrasted with a policy of enslavement (2.42.3). Furthermore, the reference to ἰσηγορία (equal right of speech; political equality) and the explicit statement ἴσα πάντα ποιοῦσα (making all equal) indicate that ἰσότης is used to describe an arrangement in which one member does not exceed another member in power or prestige.[73] Since treating people as equals is indeed equitable, ἰσότης could have been appropriately glossed as "equity." However, there is nothing in this passage to indicate that ἰσότης means equity in a sense distinct from equality.

A closer examination of the entry in LSJ underscores this point. In the entry for ἰσότης, the first meaning listed is "equality," and the second is "fair dealing, impartiality." Each sense is supported by a number of purported examples. While the passage from Polybius cited above is listed as an example of the second sense, the following passage from the same work is listed as an example of the first sense:

> When children inherited this position of authority from their fathers, having no experience of misfortune and none at all of civil equality and liberty of speech [πολιτικῆς ἰσότητος καὶ παρρησίας], and having been brought up from the cradle amid the evidences of the power and high position of their fathers, they abandoned themselves some to greed of gain [πλεονεξίαν] and unscrupulous [ἄδικον] moneymaking, others to indulgence in wine and the convivial excess which accompanies it, and others again to the violation of women and the rape of boys. (6.8.4–5)

It is a fundamental principle in lexical semantics that "a new sense should not be claimed unless it is clear than an utterance cannot naturally be explained by established senses."[74] There is absolutely no need to posit different senses for ἰσότης in 6.8.4 and 2.38.9. In both passages, the

[73] Glosses for ἰσηγορία from LSJ 836.

[74] Turner, "Modern Linguistics and the New Testament," 171. See also John Chadwick, *Lexicographica Graeca: Contributions to the Lexicography of Ancient Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 23–24.

term is associated with παρρησία and used to describe a political system in which one person does not exceed another person in power or privileges.

(2) In another passage which was discussed above in Section 4.1, Diodorus Siculus states, "[Zeus] visited practically the entire inhabited earth, putting to death robbers and impious men and introducing equality and democracy [τὴν ἰσότητα καὶ τὴν δημοκρατίαν]" (5.71.2 [Oldfather, LCL]).[75] As noted in the previous discussion of this passage, Diodorus continues on to explain that this campaign involved executing those who had "enslaved" others (5.71.5). Nothing in this passage suggests that ἰσότης means fairness in a sense distinct from equality. On the contrary, the association with democracy indicates that ἰσότης does indeed refer to equality. As discussed in Section 4.1, ἰσότης is routinely associated with democracy. Aristotle, for example, explains that many believe "freedom" (ἐλευθερία) and "equality" (ἰσότης) are "chiefly found in a democracy." Aristotle explicitly describes this equality as a state in which "the poor have no more prominence than the rich, and neither class is sovereign [κυρίους], but both are alike" (*Pol.* 4.4.2 [1291B.31–37]).

(3) Menander states, "Honor ἰσότητα and overreach no one" (Ἰσότητα τίμα, καὶ πλεονέκτει μηδένα; *Monost.* 259).[76] Again, there is nothing in this passage to indicate that ἰσότης means fairness in a sense distinct from equality. The contrast between equality and the desire to surpass others is a common theme in the extant literature. In a discourse on πλεονεξία, Dio Chrysostom complains, "Not one man refrains from it or is willing to have equality of possessions [ἴσον] with his neighbour" (*Or.* 17.6 [*Avar.*; Cohoon; LCL]). Instead, "we strive earnestly each to have more than his neighbour" (20). In denouncing such ambition, Dio cites

[75] Cited in BDAG 481.

[76] Cited in LSJ 840; *MM* 307; BDAG 481. The translation is my own.

Euripides: "At greed [πλεονεξίας], the worst of deities, my son, Why graspest thou? ... 'tis best to venerate Equality [ἰσότητα τιμᾶν]" (9).[77] We have already considered a number of other passages in which ἰσότης is contrasted with πλεονεξία. Recall that the two terms are contrasted in both passages in which Philo explains why certain Jewish sects reject slavery (*Good Person* 79; *Contempl. Life* 70–71 [ἀνισότητα]; see discussion in Section 4.1 above). They are also contrasted in Polybius 6.8.4–5, which, as discussed above, LSJ lists as an example for ἰσότης as "equality."

(4) Philo states, "The mother of justice [δικαιοσύνης] is equality [ἰσότης]" (*Spec. Laws* 4.231 [Colson, LCL]).[78] This passage hardly demonstrates that ἰσότης can mean fairness in a sense distinct from equality. While this passage is cited in BDAG to support the gloss "fairness," such a gloss is inappropriate here. The translation, "the mother of justice is fairness," obscures Philo's logic. Of course Philo believes that justice entails fairness, but here he is arguing that just conduct is rooted in the fundamental principle of equality which pervades nature. He continues on to explain, "All things in heaven and earth have been ordered aright by equality [ἰσότης] under immovable laws and statutes" (4.232). To support this assertion, Philo points to the "the equality [τῆς ἰσότητος] of length in the days and nights" during the equinoxes, as well as the "equal intervals" (διαστημάτων ἰσότητι) in the waxing and waning of the moon (4.232–34).[79]

[77] Citing Eurip. *Phoen.* 506–36. On the contrast between equality and greed, see also Sen. Y. *Ep.* 90.36–41; Lucian *Sat.* 19–24. For more on this contrast, see Murray Vasser, "Sell Your Possessions: Luke 12:33 and the Greco-Roman Utopian Ideal," *STR* 8.1 (2017): 19–37, esp. 28–32.

[78] Cited by Stählin, *TDNT* 3:354; BDAG 481. Philo makes similar statements regarding the relationship between δικαιοσύνη and ἰσότης in *Spec. Laws* 4.238; *Planting* 122; *Heir* 163; *Embassy* 85.

[79] On the connection between the equinox and ἰσότης, "the source and fountain of justice," see also Philo *Spec. Laws* 2.204 (Colson, LCL).

Note that this connection between justice and cosmic equality is developed extensively in *Heir* 133–66. As discussed in Section 4.2.1.3, Philo distinguishes between four types of equality: equality of number, proportion, magnitude, and force (144–45). After asserting that God created the world "according to all the forms of equality [ἰσότητος]" (146 [Colson, LCL]), Philo explains how these four types of equality are embodied with creation.[80] For example, the division of the material world into two heavy elements (earth and water) and two light elements (fire and air) displays numerical equality (146), while the equinoxes display equality of magnitude (147–150). Thus the creation story in Genesis extolls "equality" (ἰσότητα), which is "the nurse of justice" (163–164).

(5) BDAG inexplicably cites the phrase ἰσότητα ποιεῖν by the astrologer Vettius Valens (9.2.43 [332.34]).[81] This phrase, when read in context, has nothing to do with fair conduct. It appears in a discussion of astronomical measurements, and is rendered by Mark Riley, "To measure off an equal distance."[82]

(6) Diogenes Laertius states, "Each of the other virtues is concerned with its own proper sphere. To wisdom are subordinate good counsel and understanding; to temperance, good discipline and orderliness; to justice, equality and fair-mindedness [τῇ δὲ δικαιοσύνῃ ἰσότης καὶ εὐγνωμοσύνη]; to courage, constancy and vigour" (7.126 [Hicks, LCL]).[83] Again, there is nothing here to indicate that ἰσότης means fairness in a sense distinct from equality. Of course

[80] Eduard Schweizer asserts that the close connection which Philo posits between justice and ἰσότης stems from the notion of proportional equality [*Kolosser*, 168–69]. However, the ἰσότης which Philo identifies as the mother of justice is not limited to proportional equality.

[81] BDAG 481.

[82] Mark Riley, "Vettius Valens: *Anthologies*," 152, https://www.csus.edu/indiv/r/rileymt/Vettius%20Valens%20entire.pdf.

[83] Cited by Stählin, *TDNT* 3:354; BDAG 481. See also Philo *Heir* 161; *Moses* 2.9.

this passage, like the one from Philo discussed above (*Spec. Laws* 4.231), demonstrates that there is a close relationship between ἰσότης and justice. This point, however, is not disputed. As already demonstrated in Section 4.1, ἰσότης is routinely associated with justice, even in contexts where the term clearly means equality.

(7) One final passage deserves mention. Outside of Col 4:1, ἰσότης appears in the NT only in 2 Cor 8:13–15. Scholars often contrast the use of ἰσότης in this passage with the use of the term in Col 4:1. Outi Leppä's assessment is typical: "Normally, like in 2 Cor, ἰσότης means 'equality' but in Col 4:1 it is used rather in the sense of 'equity, fairness.'"[84] However, as Julien M. Ogereau observes, it is "unlikely" that "Paul wished to impose an exact equalization of resources across all the churches." Ogereau correctly notes that such an objective would be "impractical, if not impossible." Thus Ogereau suggests that in 2 Corinthians, ἰσότης means "a relative, proportional equality." In support of this conclusion, Ogereau notes that in his appropriation of Exod 16:18, Paul leaves out the detail that "exactly one omer was measured out and distributed to each." Furthermore, Ogereau notes that Philo cites this same passage as an example of proportional equality (*Heir* 191).[85] Though Ogereau does not discuss Col 4:1, one might perhaps argue that Paul's use of ἰσότης in 2 Cor 8:13–15 constitutes evidence that ἰσότης in Col 4:1 also means "a relative, proportional equality."

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[84] Leppä, *Making of Colossians*, 189. So also BDAG 481; Wilson, *Colossians and Philemon*, 287; Gnilka, *Der Kolosserbrief*, 224–25. Dieter Georgi suggests that ἰσότης in 2 Cor 8:13 is "practically interchangeable" with θεός [*Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 84–91, esp. 88–89]. This interpretation has largely been rejected by scholars [C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, BNTC (London: Hendrickson, 1973), 226–27; Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 407; Margaret E. Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2 vols., *ICC* (London: T&T Clark, 2000), 2:539–40].

[85] Julien M. Ogereau, "The Jerusalem Collection as Κοινωνία: Paul's Global Politics of Socio-Economic Equality and Solidarity," *NTS* 58.3 (2012): 360–78, esp. 365–66. See also Furnish, *II Corinthians*, 407–8.

However, Philo cites the manna distribution as an example of proportional equality precisely because the Israelites were instructed to gather exactly one omer for each person in their tent (Exod 16:16).[86] This rule established proportional equality because it required those with larger families to gather more than those with smaller families. Numerical equality would have required every collector to gather the same, regardless of family size. (See the discussion of numerical and proportional equality in Section 4.2.1.3 above.) Thus Paul's omission of the omer hardly demonstrates that he is referring to proportional equality. Proportional equality, at least in theory, is every bit as rigorous and precise as numerical equality.

Moreover, the notion of proportional equality simply does not apply to the distribution Paul envisions. Paul utilizes the language of Exod 16:18 to describe a scenario in which one church gives her excess to supply the need of another church.[87] While the distribution of manna was scaled by family size, there is no such factor by which Paul's distribution is scaled; the one with excess simply gives to the one with need. As L. L. Welborn rightly observes in his study on ἰσότης in 2 Cor 8:13–15, there is in this passage a "total absence ... of the idea of proportional equality."[88] To suggest that the distribution is proportioned by need simply because the party

[86] The equality in the distribution of manna is also emphasized in Jos. *Ant.* 3.29–30.

[87] Scholars debate whether the excess of the Jerusalem church is to be seen as spiritual (cf. Rom 15:27) or material. The theory of spiritual excess is defended by Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 68–69; Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 334–39. The theory of material excess is defended by Barrett, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 226–27; Thrall, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 540–42; Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 193; Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 591–92. Victor Paul Furnish suggests that 2 Cor 8:14 is merely "a formal statement of the principle of equality, with no special thought for what its operation might involve in the future" [*II Corinthians*, 419–20].

[88] L. L. Welborn, "Paul's Place in a First-Century Revival of the Discourse of 'Equality,'" *HTR* 110.4 (2017): 541–62, esp. 559. The idea of proportionality does surface in Paul's descriptions of

with excess gives to the party with need is to completely misunderstand the concept of proportional equality.

Finally, the fact that Paul's collection is unlikely to produce "an exact equalization of resources across all the churches" hardly proves that ἰσότης means something less than equality. Paul is presenting an ideal.[89] The language of 2 Cor 8:15 naturally suggests that both the giving party and the receiving party end up with the same amount.

In conclusion, while scholars such as Balch claim that it is "misleading" to translate ἰσότης as "equality" in Col 4:1, they have failed to produce even one example from the extant Greek literature in which such a translation of this term is inappropriate. In terms of the diagram presented in Section 4.2.1.2 above, scholars have been unable to produce any passage outside of Col 4:1 that falls into region C. Interpreters of Col 4:1 would thus do well to heed the warning of John Chadwick:

> A constant problem to guard against [in lexicography] is the proliferation of meanings. ... It is often tempting to create a new sense to accommodate a difficult example, but we must always ask first, if there is any other way of taking the word which would allow us to assign the example to an already established sense. We need the lexicographic equivalent of Occam's razor: *sensus non sunt multiplicandi praeter necessitatem*.[90]

Does the context of Col 4:1 demand a new sense for ἰσότης? It is to this question that we now turn.

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the voluntary donations. These are to be "according to your means" and "according to what one has" (2 Cor 8:11–12; NRSV). However, the term ἰσότης is not applied to the relationship between the various donors in Corinth; it is applied to the relationship between the Corinthian and Judean churches.

[89] Philo describes ἰσότης as an ideal which humans can only imperfectly achieve (*Heir* 142–43).

[90] Chadwick, *Lexicographica Graeca*, 23. This version of Occam's Razor was first articulated by Paul Grice [*Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 47].

4.3. Ἰσότης in Colossians 4:1

In Sections 4.1 and 4.2, I presented evidence which suggests that ἰσότης should be understood as equality instead of merely fairness. Nevertheless, in Col 4:1 the term appears in a context in which slavery "is clearly not abolished."[91] Thus many scholars insist that here the term cannot mean equality. However, the church fathers who understood ἰσότης in Col 4:1 as equality evidently did not consider the command to require the abolition of slavery (see discussion in Section 3.1 above). In what follows, I will develop two additional lines of evidence which indicate that the context of Col 4:1 does not prohibit the interpretation of ἰσότης as equality. First, strange as it may seem to modern readers, some first-century moralists who did not challenge the institution of slavery nevertheless exhorted masters to treat their slaves as equals. Second, the notion of equality between master and slave is supported by a number of elements in the literary and social context of Col 4:1.

4.3.1. Equality in First-Century Discussions of the Slave/Master Relationship

While the ancients did not attempt to abolish slavery, a number of first-century philosophers recognized the ontological equality of master and slave. In response to those who looked down on slaves, Seneca presents the following exchange:

> "They are slaves," people declare. Nay, rather they are men. "Slaves!" No, comrades. "Slaves!" No, they are unpretentious friends. "Slaves!" No, they are our fellow-slaves, if one reflects that Fortune has equal rights over slaves and free men alike. ... He whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies, and on equal terms with yourself breathes, lives, and dies. (*Ep.* 47.1, 10 [Gummere, LCL])

Seneca argues further that there is no intrinsic difference between a slave and a free person, for through the vicissitudes of fortune, the master may one day become a slave (47.12; see also 9–

[91] MacDonald, 'Slavery, Sexuality and House Churches': 106.

10).[92] Moreover, the free person may already be enslaved to his passions, while the soul of the slave may be free (47.17).[93] Similar sentiments are expressed by Epictetus, who was himself a former slave. In rebuking masters who explode in anger at their slaves, Epictetus argues as follows:

> Slave, will you not bear with your own brother, who has Zeus as his progenitor and is, as it were, a son born of the same seed as yourself and of the same sowing from above; but if you have been stationed in a like position above others, will you forthwith set yourself up as a tyrant? Do you not remember what you are, and over whom you rule—that they are kinsmen, that they are brothers by nature, that they are the offspring of Zeus? (*Diatr.* 1.13.3–4 [Oldfather, LCL])

The ontological equality of master and slave is also expressed by an unknown first-century author writing as the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus.[94] In the midst of rebuking the Ephesians for scorning slaves and freedmen, pseudo-Heraclitus reasons, "If God did not make dogs or sheep slaves, nor asses nor horses nor mules, did he then make men slaves?" (*Ep.* 9.7–9).[95] Philo likewise observes, "Servants are free by nature, no man being naturally a slave" (*Spec. Laws* 2.69 [Colson, LCL]).[96]

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[92] See also Philo *Good Person* 18.

[93] This is an extremely common idea in Greco-Roman philosophy. Philo, for example, wrote a pair of treatises entitled *That Every Good Person Is Free* and *That Every Bad Person is a Slave*, the latter of which is not extant (*Good Person* 1). See also Sen. Y. *Ben.* 3.28.4–5; Epict. *Diatr.* 4.1.1–5.

[94] Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition*, SBLSBS 12 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 22.

[95] Translation from David R. Worley, "The Epistles of Heraclitus," in *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition*, by Abraham J. Malherbe, SBLSBS 12 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 185–215, esp. 213.

[96] Cf. *Good Person* 79; *Contempl. Life* 70. Many express the opposite view. Aristotle, for example, maintained that there were certain people who were "slaves by nature." For such people, "slavery is an institution both expedient and just" (*Pol.* 1.2.11–15 [1254B–1255A; Rackham, LCL]). Likewise, Arius Didymus asserts that the man's rulership over his household is "according to nature," for the "deliberative faculty" is inferior in the woman and "altogether absent in slaves" (*Epit.* 100.1.10–12 [149.7–9]). See also Jos. *Ant.* 4.219. As Peter Garnsey

In addition to recognizing an ontological equality between master and slave, the ancients often presented the absence of slavery as ideal. In recounting the laws of the Indians, Diodorus describes the law prohibiting slavery as the one "most worthy of admiration" (2.39.5 [Oldfather, LCL]).[97] Philo presents the Essenes' rejection of slavery as evidence of their "high moral excellence" (*Good Person* 75–79 [Colson, LCL]).[98] Pseudo-Heraclitus argues, "How much superior are the wolves and lions to the Ephesians? They do not reduce one another to slavery, nor does one eagle buy another eagle, nor does one lion pour wine for another lion, nor does one dog castrate another dog" (*Ep.* 9.12–14).[99] As noted above, Epictetus reprimands cruel masters with the argument that all men are children of Zeus. Epictetus then anticipates this objection from the master: "But I have a deed of sale for them, and they have none for me." Epictetus replies that this objection is focused downward on "these wretched laws of ours" instead of upwards to "the laws of the gods" (*Diatr.* 1.13.5 [Oldfather, LCL]). Thus, according to Epictetus, the inequality enshrined in legal slavery is at odds with the natural equality intended by the gods.[100]

Furthermore, according to a popular utopian myth, mankind once lived in complete equality without slavery. This golden age was often associated with the reign of the god

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emphasizes, Philo himself invokes such a view of slavery in his treatment of certain biblical passages, such as the story of Jacob and Esau [*Ideas*, 157–72]. See esp. *Good Person* 57; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.88–89; 3.192–95; *Prelim. Studies* 175–76; cf. Basil *Spir. sanct.* 20 [51.7–27]. The above translation of Arius Didymus is from Tsouni, "Didymus' Epitome," 59.

[97] This passage is discussed in Section 4.1 above.

[98] See also Philo *Contempl. Life* 70–71.

[99] Translation from Worley in Malherbe, *Cynic Epistles*, 213.

[100] Cf. Philo *Good Person* 37.

Saturn/Chronus and thus celebrated during the popular Saturnalia festival in December.[101] In a satirical dialogue by Lucian, Chronus explains that he wishes during the Saturnalia "to remind mankind what life was like under me" when "there was no slavery." Thus "everyone, slave and free man, is held as good as his neighbor" (*Sat.* 7 [Kilburn, LCL]). Macrobius likewise explains that "slaves are allowed complete license during the Saturnalia" because during the reign of Saturn "the distinction between slavery and freedom did not yet exist" (*Sat.* 1.7.26 [Kaster, LCL]).[102] In his epitome of Pompeius Trogus, Justin explains that the first Italians were ruled by Saturnus, "a man so just that there was no slavery during his reign." Justin continues on to explain that it is "to commemorate the example of this man" that slaves are allowed "to recline with their masters at the Saturnalia, with all enjoying a position of equality" (*Epitome* 43.1.3–4).[103] Plutarch also notes that the custom of slaves dining with masters during the Saturnalia was understood by many as "a reminder of the equality [ἰσονομίας] which characterized the famous Saturnian age, when there was neither slave nor master, but all were regarded as kinsmen and equals [ἰσοτίμων]" (*Comp. Lyc. Num.* 1.5.9–12 [Perrin, LCL]).[104]

In addition to presenting the absence of slavery as ideal, some moralists attributed the existence of slavery to human vice. Philo states, "Nature has borne all men to be free, but the wrongful and covetous acts of some who pursued that source of evil, inequality, have imposed

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[101] On the popularity of the Saturnalia, see Plut. *Quaest. rom.* 34; Sen. Y. *Ep.* 18.1; Pliny *Ep.* 17.24.

[102] On the license granted to slaves during the Saturnalia, see Lucian *Sat.* 5.16–20; Ausonius *Eclogues* 23.15–16; Hor. *Sat.* 2.7.1–5; Dio Cass. 60.19.3; Sen. Y. *Ep.* 47.10–16.

[103] Translation from J. C. Yardley, *Justin: Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 263–64.

[104] The social implications of table fellowship are reflected in Pliny's statement that he serves the same fare to all at his table, including the freedmen, because he has brought them "as equals to the same table" (*Ep.* 2.6.3–4).

their yoke and invested the stronger with power over the weaker" (*Contempl. Life* 70–71 [Colson, LCL]).[105] This understanding of slavery as an unnatural state that arose through human violence is also found among the church fathers. Ambrosiaster explains, "God did not create slaves and freemen, but made everyone free-born. However, by the wickedness of the world it came about that when one group invaded the territory of another it took free people captive" (*Comm.* Col 4:1). In addressing the origins of slavery, John Chrysostom likewise states, "Slavery is the fruit of covetousness, of degradation, of savagery. ... The thing was the fruit of sin" (*Hom. Eph.* 22 [62.157.41–44]).[106]

Nevertheless, despite these depictions of slavery as unnatural and regressive, the ancients did not advocate for abolition. Note that while Philo praised the Essenes for rejecting slavery, he also praised them for rejecting private property and all forms of commerce (*Good Person* 76–78, 85–87). There is no reason to suppose that Philo considered the general abolition of slavery any more advisable than the general abolition of private property or commerce. Even Epictetus, who was born a slave, never suggested that the system should be abolished.

However, some moralists did insist that a master's treatment of his slave should be conditioned by the knowledge that the master and slave share a fundamental equality. This position is developed most extensively in Seneca's forty-seventh epistle to Lucilius.[107] Before considering Seneca's advice, recall the words of Plato:

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[105] See also Philo *Good Person* 79.

[106] Translation from *NPNF*[1] 13:159. So also Cyril Alex. *Fr. 1 Cor.* 273.15–18. On the ontological equality of master and slave in patristic sources, see Note 48 in Section 3.1.8 above.

[107] For discussions of Seneca's views on slavery, see Keith R. Bradley, "Seneca and Slavery," in *Seneca*, ed. John G. Fitch, Oxford Readings in Classical Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 335–47; Brookins, "(Dis)Correspondence"; Timothy A. Brookins, "Slaves to the Culture? Attitudes on Slavery in Paul and Seneca," in *Paul and the Giants of Philosophy:*

> We ought to punish slaves justly, and not to make them conceited by merely admonishing them as we would free men. An address to a servant should be mostly a simple command: there should be no jesting with servants, either male or female, for by a course of excessively foolish indulgence in their treatment of their slaves, masters often make life harder both for themselves, as rulers, and for their slaves, as subject to rule. (*Leg.* 777E–778A [Bury, LCL])

Plato elsewhere asserts, "Slaves will never be friends with masters" (*Leg.* 757A).[108] In his epistle to Lucilius, Seneca presents an entirely different view of the slave/master relationship: "Associate with your slave on kindly, even on affable, terms; let him talk with you, plan with you, live with you. ... You need not ... hunt for friends only in the forum or in the Senate-house; if you are careful and attentive, you will find them at home also" (*Ep.* 47.13–16).[109] These words are particularly striking given Seneca's previous advice to Lucilius concerning friendship:

> Ponder for a long time whether you shall admit a given person to your friendship; but when you have decided to admit him, welcome him with all your heart and soul. Speak as boldly with him as with yourself. ... Why need I keep back any words in the presence of my friend? Why should I not regard myself as alone when in his company? (*Ep.* 3.2–3)

Furthermore, in the epistle immediately following his epistle on slaves, Seneca reminds Lucilius, "I am not your friend unless whatever is at issue concerning you is my concern also. Friendship produces between us a partnership in all our interests" (*Ep.* 48.2). In another work, Seneca describes friendship as "a bond between equals" (*Ben.* 2.21.2 [Basore, LCL]).[110]

Seneca specifically urges masters to invite certain slaves to dine with them at the table. As noted above, slaves were permitted to dine with their masters during the Saturnalia festival,

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Reading the Apostle in Greco-Roman Context, ed. Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019), 50–60.

[108] See Note 10 in Section 4.1 above.

[109] Ps.-Phocylides urges masters to accept advice from a wise slave (227).

[110] These statements reflect the common conviction that equality was essential to friendship. See Note 30 in Section 4.1 above.

but Seneca suggests that the practice should be observed throughout the year (*Ep.* 47.14–15).[111] The practice of dining with slaves is also recommended by Pseudo-Heraclitus:

> The Ephesians say "Let not a slave sit with me nor dine with me." But I shall pronounce a more just dictum: "Let a good man sit with me and dine with me," rather, let him take the chief seat, let him receive the greater honor, for it is not fortune that makes men equal [τὸ ἰσούμενον], but virtue. (*Ep.* 9.20–24)

What of corporeal punishment? As noted above, Plato urged masters "to punish slaves justly, and not to make them conceited by merely admonishing them as we would free people" (*Leg.* 777E).[112] Seneca gives precisely the opposite advice: "Respect means love, and love and fear cannot be mingled. So I hold that you are entirely right in not wishing to be feared by your slaves, and in lashing them merely with the tongue; only dumb animals need the thong" (*Ep.* 47.19).[113] Citing *Ira* 3.32.1–3, Harrill asserts that even Seneca "recognized the need for moderate floggings."[114] This, however, is an uncharitable reading of Seneca. Harrill ignores the passage quoted above in which Seneca explicitly commends a master for rejecting corporeal punishment. Furthermore, contrary to Harrill's assertion, Seneca in *Ira* 3.32.1–3 never affirms a "need" for flogging. In this passage, Seneca rebukes masters for punishing slaves with prison, chains, starvation, or even death for offenses which merely "deserve the censure of a very light flogging" (Basore, LCL). All Seneca affirms here is that a slave may commit an act that *merits*

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[111] Here Seneca states that the ancient Romans who instituted the custom of eating with slaves during the Saturnalia did not intend for the practice to be restricted to that festival. Plutarch likewise claims that the ancient Romans treated slaves "with great kindness" and "even ate with them" (*Cor.* 24.4 [Perrin, LCL]). On dining with slaves, see also Colum. *Rust.* 11.19.

[112] Cf. Prov 29:19. On admonishing slaves, see also Arist. *Pol*. 1.5.11 [1260B].

[113] Plutarch relates an event in which the ancient Romans were scandalized by the sight of a slave being brutally scourged and executed. According to Plutarch, the Romans of that era did not punish their slaves harshly. At most, they would require the offending slave to go about the neighborhood carrying a piece of wood as a public shaming (*Cor.* 24.3–5).

[114] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 105–7.

flogging. The magnanimous master remains free to follow Seneca's advice in *Ep.* 47.19 and merely give the slave a tongue-lashing. This, in fact, is evidently what Seneca recommends. Earlier in *De ira*, Seneca explicitly encouraged masters to forgive slaves and forgo punishment:

> What right have I to make my slave atone by stripes and manacles for too loud a reply, too rebellious a look, a muttering of something that I do not quite hear? Who am I that it should be a crime to offend my ears? Many have pardoned their enemies; shall I not pardon the lazy, the careless, and the babbler? Let a child be excused by his age, a woman by her sex, a stranger by his independence, a servant by the bond of intercourse [*familiaritas*]. (*Ira* 3.24.2–3) [115]

While Seneca provides the most developed statement of the view that masters should treat their slaves with some degree of equality, Philo offers a particularly striking parallel to both the form and content of Col 3:22–4:1. Philo states that the law provides instructions "to servants on rendering an affectionate loyalty to their masters, to masters on showing the gentleness and kindness by which inequality is equalized [δι᾽ ὧν ἐξισοῦται τὸ ἄνισον]" (*Decalogue* 167 [Colson, LCL]).[116] Not only does this passage pair the duties of slave and master, but it also uses the language of equality to describe the relationship between master and slave. In another noteworthy passage, Philo states more specifically that the law prohibits masters from breaking apart slave families: "Children must not be parted from their parents even if you hold them as captive, nor a wife from her husband even if you are her owner by lawful purchase" (*Hypothetica* 7.8 [Colson, LCL]).[117]

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[115] In his discussion of *Ira* 3.32.1–3, Keith Bradley concludes that Seneca saw "nothing wrong" with giving a slave a light beating ["Seneca and Slavery," 333–34]. It is probably true that Seneca did not consider it "wrong" to give a slave a light beating, but as discussed above, Seneca evidently believes it would be *better* to forego punishment and forgive the slave (*Ira* 3.24.2–3; *Ep.* 47.19).

[116] As Garnsey notes, however, Philo can elsewhere speak of harsh treatment as beneficial for the slave [*Ideas* 169]. See *Unchangeable* 63–64; *Sobriety* 69.

[117] Documents recording the sale of slaves in Egypt indicate that families were often separated [Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012),

Now modern readers will of course recognize that even the relatively humane views of Philo and Seneca are entirely inadequate as a response to slavery. Even if the advice these moralists give was followed, the master still *owns* his slaves. (Note that in another discourse, Seneca casually observes that when one buys a slave, he strips the slave for examination [*Ep.* 80.9].) Furthermore, one may question to what degree the lofty sentiments expressed in Seneca's forty-seventh epistle reflect the reality of his own household. Seneca himself acknowledges that he and other philosophers were often accused of not living up to their own ideals (*Vit. beat.* 17–18).[118]

Nevertheless, the salient point for our investigation is this: some first-century moralists encouraged masters to treat their slaves, at least to some degree, as equals. The specific behaviors recommended by these moralists included making friends with slaves (Seneca), dining with slaves (Seneca; pseudo-Heraclitus), giving up corporeal punishment (Seneca), and preserving slave families (Philo). Furthermore, these moralists evidently did not consider this talk of equality between master and slave to be incompatible with the continuation of slavery. At the conclusion of his epistle on the proper treatment of slaves, Seneca explicitly denies that he is requiring masters to free their slaves (*Ep.* 47.18), and Seneca himself owned many slaves (*Vit. beat.* 17). Thus we cannot conclude that because Col 4:1 does not abolish slavery, τὴν ἰσότητα does not mean equality.

2:1928]. Pseudo-Aristotle recommended allowing slaves to beget children so that the master could use them as "hostages" to ensure the slaves' fidelity (*Oec.* 1.5 [1344B.17–18; Armstrong, LCL]).

[118] Such accusations continue to the present day: "He [i.e. Seneca] has continued to be criticized as a hypocrite as he was in antiquity: he preached the unimportance of wealth but did not surrender his until the end; he compromised the principles he preached by flattering those in power and by condoning many of Nero's crimes" (Leighton Durham Reynolds, M. T. Griffin, and Elaine Fantham, "Annaeus Seneca, Lucius," *OCD* 92–95, esp. 94).

4.3.2. Equality in the Literary and Social Context of Colossians 4:1

In discussing the interpretation of Col 4:1, scholars have focused on the important fact that the command occurs in a context which assumes the continuation of slavery. However, it is also true that Col 4:1 occurs in a context which suggests a rather remarkable degree of equality between slave and master. First, slaves are directly addressed in the *Haustafel* as equal members of the community. As discussed above in Section 2.3.4, many scholars across a wide spectrum of opinion on the *Haustafel* have acknowledged that this direct address to slaves is unusual. The parallel Harrill suggests with the agricultural handbooks is unimpressive.[119] First, the *Haustafel* is addressed to ordinary domestic slaves, while the instructions in the agricultural handbooks are addressed to the elite bailiff who is managing a large estate. Second, the *Haustafel* instructs the slave to obey the master, while the direct address found in the agricultural handbooks comprises detailed instructions about a variety of technical subjects. If this is the closest parallel that can be found, it serves rather to underscore the uniqueness of the *Haustafel*.

The notion that slaves are considered equal members of the community is supported, not only by the form of the *Haustafel*, but also by the content. As mentioned in Section 2.4.5 above, the word to slaves in 3:23–24 echoes two passages which were addressed to the entire community (Col 1:12; 3:17). Furthermore, on the reasonable assumption that the Onesimus mentioned in Col 4:9 is the same Onesimus mentioned in Phlm 10, we have a concrete example of a slave who is considered a "beloved brother" (Phlm 16) and who is presented as an active member of the community.[120]

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[119] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 86. So also Glancy, *Moral Problem*, 54–55. See the discussion and notes in Section 2.3.4 above.

[120] The active participation of slaves in the Christian community is not completely unique. Epicurus included his slaves in his philosophical school (Diog. Laert. 10.3, 10). In defense of the

Most importantly, the *Haustafel* comes a few lines after the explicit declaration, "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; NRSV). As discussed above in Section 2.4.5, some scholars posit a significant tension between this declaration and the *Haustafel*. While it is of course possible that a document contains such an internal inconsistency, one should always prefer a simpler hypothesis over a more complex hypothesis, provided that both have the same explanatory power. Colossians 3:11 says nothing about gender or age; thus there is no apparent conflict with the first two pairings in the *Haustafel*. If there is a conflict, it must concern the position of the slave. However, if ἰσότης means equality, then Col 4:1 is in continuity with Col 3:11. A text which commands masters to grant their slaves equality is quite plausibly explained as an attempt to bring the theology of Col 3:11 into the household.

Finally, in addition to these elements of the literary context of Col 4:1, we should also note one element of the social context: Christian masters and slaves apparently ate the Lord's Supper together.[121] While the eucharist is not discussed in the epistle, there can be little doubt that the Colossian church observed this important Christian rite. As discussed in Section 4.3.1 above, table fellowship between master and slave was a countercultural behavior that expressed a fundamental equality between master and slave. Thus in summary, a number of elements in the context of Col 4:1 support the interpretation of τὴν ἰσότητα as equality.

Christian practice of seeking to convert slaves, Origen notes that the philosophers encourage slaves to study philosophy (*Cels.* 3.54).

[121] On potential problems arising from different classes sharing the Lord's supper, see the analysis of 1 Cor 11:17–34 in Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982), 145–74.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to determine the meaning of ἰσότης in Col 4:1. First I explored the use of ἰσότης in the context of slavery, focusing on the non-Christian Greek literature prior to 300 CE (Section 4.1). While I found no instance in which ἰσότης is used to refer to the proper treatment of slaves, I found fifteen passages in which ἰσότης is presented as incompatible with slavery. I also demonstrated that these passages contain a number of parallels to Col 4:1. In four of the fifteen passages, ἰσότης is used in discussions of household relationships. In one passage, ἰσότης is the object of the verb παρέχω. In seven passages, ἰσότης is associated with δίκαιος or contrasted with ἄδικος/ἀδικία.

Next, I considered the common assertion that ἰσότης sometimes means fairness in a sense distinct from equality (Section 4.2). I began by critiquing the methodology employed by defenders of this view (Section 4.2.1). I then examined the passages which purport to illustrate this use of ἰσότης (Section 4.2.2). I concluded that while most scholars insist that the gloss "equality" is misleading in Col 4:1, these scholars have failed to produce a single passage outside of Col 4:1 in which this gloss would not be appropriate.

Finally, I examined the assertion that the context of Col 4:1 prohibits us from understanding ἰσότης as equality (Section 4.3). I argued that three lines of evidence contradict this assertion. First, as explained in Chapter 3, a number of the earliest extant commentators understood ἰσότης in Col 4:1 as equality, despite living within the context of ongoing Christian slavery. Second, some first-century moralists exhorted masters to treat their slaves as equals without thereby suggesting that slavery should be abolished (Section 4.3.1). Finally, several elements of the literary and social context of Col 4:1 indicate that slaves enjoyed an unusual degree of equality with masters in the Christian community (Section 4.3.2).

These findings undermine the widespread conviction that Col 4:1 is an unremarkable command to treat slaves fairly. The command to grant slaves τὴν ἰσότητα is surprising and difficult. If taken in isolation, such a command could have easily been understood to require the abolition of slavery. However, the immediate context prohibits this interpretation. The *Haustafel* clearly anticipates the continuation of the slave/master relationship. How then would the original auditors have understood the command to grant slaves τὴν ἰσότητα?

Scholars have failed to produce an example from the extant Greek literature in which ἰσότης means fairness in a sense distinct from equality. Of course it is possible that the tension between ἰσότης and slavery prompted the original auditors to adopt this unattested meaning of the term. Perhaps they imported the notion of geometric equality from the philosophers and interpreted τὴν ἰσότητα as an equality proportioned by rank, or perhaps they simply ignored the unique contribution of τὴν ἰσότητα and allowed τὸ δίκαιον to govern their interpretation of the command. Some such move seems to have been made by Theodoret and others (see Section 3.1 above).

More likely, however, the original auditors interpreted Col 4:1 as a command to treat slaves as equals.[122] Such an interpretation is in accord with the well-attested meaning of ἰσότης.

[122] As discussed in Section 2.3.5 above, G. K. Beale and several other scholars suggests that while ἰσότης means equality, the term does not refer to equality between master and slave. Instead, it refers to equality among slaves. Thus the command to grant slaves equality is merely a command to avoid favoritism. However, while such an interpretation is grammatically possible, it is unlikely for a number of reasons. First, this interpretation is unattested among the Greek fathers (see Section 3.1 above). Furthermore, there is no hint of such a concern in the parallel command of Eph 6:9. Finally, in the analogous Jewish and Greco-Roman material concerning the appropriate treatment of slaves, the problem of favoritism is not prominent (but see Xen. *Oec.* 13.12). Instead, the focus is consistently on the power dynamic between the master and the slave, with the moralist often exhorting the master to refrain from behavior that is "excessively haughty, cruel, and insulting" (Sen. Y. *Ep*. 47.11 [Gummere, LCL]). See Note 93 in Section 5.3 below.

Furthermore, the notion of equality between master and slave is supported by various elements in the context of Col 4:1. Finally, contemporary moralists occasionally exhorted masters to treat their slaves as equals.

Nevertheless, the command to grant slaves τὴν ἰσότητα remains puzzling. While Seneca and Philo encourage masters to strive for some degree of equality in their interactions with slaves, both philosophers clearly describe the behavior which they envision. Colossians 4:1, by contrast, is vague and open-ended. For this reason, Colossians could certainly be deemed less progressive than Philo or Seneca. The slave owners in the Colossian community are not explicitly told to take any of the concrete actions recommended by Philo and Seneca, such as dining with slaves, abandoning corporeal punishment, or preserving slave families. On the other hand, the open-ended nature of the command renders it rather more unsettling than anything found in Philo or Seneca. As noted in Section 4.3.1 above, a close parallel to Col 4:1 is found in Philo's statement that masters should show slaves the "kindness by which inequality is equalized" (*Decalogue* 167). While the language of equality between master and slave is striking, there is nothing particularly countercultural about the notion that masters should treat their slaves with kindness. Suppose, however, that Philo had not mentioned kindness. Suppose he had simply urged masters to eliminate inequality with their slaves. One would be left wondering just how far Philo intended for masters to go. This is precisely the situation we have in Col 4:1.

CHAPTER 5:
Mutual Submission in Ephesians 6:9

As discussed in Chapter 2, most scholars insist that the words τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς in Eph 6:9 "cannot be taken literally."[1] Nevertheless, the author's choice to introduce the *Haustafel* with an explicit call for mutual submission (Eph 5:21) lends substantial weight to the possibility that Eph 6:9 "means what it says."[2] A significant number of scholars, however, assert that 5:21 does not in fact call for mutual submission. According to these scholars, ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις could be paraphrased, "Those who are under authority should be subject to others among you who have authority over them."[3] On this reading, 5:21 does not require masters to submit to slaves. Other scholars challenge this reading and insist that the verse

[1] Winger, *Ephesians*, 669. See Sections 2.3.5 and 2.6.

[2] The quoted phrase is from Keener, *Paul*, 206. The possible connection between ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (Eph 5:21) and τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς (Eph 6:9) is noted by many scholars.

[3] John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 493–94. So also J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: A Revised Text and Translation with Exposition and Notes* (London: Macmillan, 1904), 123; Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1980), 74–76; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 139–44; Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), 52–53; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 398–404; Wayne Grudem, "The Myth of Mutual Submission as an Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 221–31; Wayne Walden, "Ephesians 5:21: A Translation Note," *ResQ* 45.4 (2003): 254; Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2004), 188–200; Gombis, "Radically New," 323–24; Wayne Walden, "Translating Ephesians 5:21," *ResQ* 47.3 (2005): 179–82; Heil, *Ephesians*, 240; Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 132; John G. Nordling, "Research Note: Ephesians 5:21," *CTQ* 77.3–4 (2013): 327–34; John G. Nordling, "Does Ephesians 5:21 Support Mutual Submission?," *Logia* 24.4 (2015): 19–28; Winger, *Ephesians*, 598–603. Though less decisive than those listed above, Harold W. Hoehner appears to hold this interpretation as well [*Ephesians*, 717].

does require mutual submission.[4] Nevertheless, many key texts from the extant Greek literature have been ignored in the debate, and both sides have made spurious assertions concerning the verb ὑποτάσσω. Thus a more thorough examination of the question is in order. In this chapter, I offer a detailed analysis of Eph 5:21 and consider the significance of this verse for the interpretation of Eph 6:9.

5.1. Mutual Submission in Ephesians 5:21

The "primary argument" against mutual submission concerns the meaning of the Greek verb ὑποτάσσω.[5] John Piper and Wayne Grudem insist that ὑποτάσσω does not mean merely, "be thoughtful and considerate; act in love." Rather, ὑποτάσσω "always implies submission to an authority." This word, they argue, "is never 'mutual' in its force; it is *always one-directional* in its reference to submission to an authority."[6] Thomas M. Winger likewise argues, "*The meaning and usage of the verb ὑποτάσσω simply does not allow for the idea of mutual submission within a*

[4] Scholars who defend mutual submission in Eph 5:21 include Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 365–66; Best, *Ephesians*, 516; Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33*, BibInt 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 213–16; I. Howard Marshall, "Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18–19 and Ephesians 5:21–33," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 186–204, esp. 196–197; Linda L. Belleville, "Women in Ministry: An Egalitarian Perspective," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck, 2nd ed., Counterpoints, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 21–103, esp. 92–95; Helton, "Ephesians"; Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 316–17; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 373–74; Keown, "Paul's Vision," 50.

[5] Piper and Grudem, *Recovering*, 493. The primacy of this argument is also noted by O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 401. Stephen B. Clark, however, believes the context of Eph 5:21 provides the primary argument against mutual submission [*Man and Woman*, 75].

[6] Piper and Grudem, *Recovering*, 493–94. Emphasis theirs. See also Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 193. The following texts are cited to support this assertion: Luke 2:51; 10:17; Rom 13:1, 5; Tit 2:5, 9; 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13, 18; 3:5, 22; 5:5; 1 Cor 15:27, 28; 16:15–16; Eph 1:22; 5:24; 1 Clem. 37:2; 42:4; Col 3:18; Heb 12:9; James 4:7; Jos. *War* 2.566, 578; 5.309.

single relationship." According to Winger, the word ὑποτάσσω "means to give a rank or place in the divinely established order of things," and "within such an order, it is impossible simultaneously to hold both upper and lower ranks."[7] Concerning ἀλλήλοις, Grudem and others insist that the pronoun does not always mean "everyone to everyone" but often means merely "some to others." One frequently cited example is the phrase ἀλλήλους σφάξουσιν in Rev 6:4. As Grudem observes, this phrase "does not mean that every person first got killed and then got back up and killed the one who had murdered him! It simply means that *some* killed *others*."[8] In addition to the meaning of ὑποτάσσω, critics of mutual submission also appeal to the context of Eph 5:21. According to these scholars, the instructions given in Eph 5:22–6:9 indicate that the submission required in 5:21 is not mutual. "As the *Haustafel* unfolds," Timothy G. Gombis explains, "It is clear that Paul does not order the relationships along mutually submissive lines."[9]

In what follows I offer a detailed critique of this argument. I examine (1) the earliest interpretations of Eph 5:21 in the Greek-speaking church, (2) the attested use of ὑποτάσσω in the extant literature, (3) parallels to Eph 5:21 in the Pauline corpus, (4) the attested use of ἀλλήλων, and (5) the context of Eph 5:21. I conclude that Eph 5:21 does indeed require mutual submission.

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[7] Winger, *Ephesians*, 600–602. Emphasis his. So also Clark, *Man and Woman*, 75–76; Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 53; Gombis, "Radically New," 323–24; Nordling, "Research Note," 329–30.

[8] Grudem, "Myth," 228–29. Emphasis his. So also Piper and Grudem, *Recovering*, 493–94. In addition to Rev 6:4, Grudem cites Gal 6:2; 1 Cor 11:33; Matt 24:10; Luke 2:15; 12:1; 24:32. Additional passages are cited by other scholars. Clark cites James 5:16 [*Man and Woman*, 76]. Winger cites Luke 7:32 and Acts 19:38 [*Ephesians*, 600]. Charles H. Talbert cites John 6:43, 52 [*Ephesians and Colossians*, 132].

[9] Gombis, "Radically New," 323–24. So also Clark, *Man and Woman*, 75; Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 52; Grudem, "Myth," 224–25.

5.1.1. The Earliest Interpretations of Ephesians 5:21

Since the principal argument against mutual submission in Eph 5:21 concerns how the Greek term ὑποτάσσω would have been understood by "a first-century Greek speaker," it is surprising that neither side in this debate has given much attention to the earliest extant interpretations of ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις.[10] As I demonstrate below, the Greek-speaking church fathers clearly understand Eph 5:21 to require mutual submission. In my search of the extant literature prior to 500 CE, I find no hint that these fathers are even aware of the "some to others" interpretation espoused by Grudem and other modern commentators.

Before examining the relevant passages, one should note that Grudem severely mischaracterizes the history of interpretation of Eph 5:21. Citing the work of another scholar, Grudem acknowledges, "A number of earlier writers thought there was a kind of 'mutual submission' taught in the verse, but that such 'submission' took very different forms for those *in authority* and for those *under authority*."[11] This is quite true. A few paragraphs later, however, Grudem gives an entirely different account of the matter. Grudem asserts that "until feminist pressures in our culture led people to look for a way to avoid the force of Ephesians 5:22," Christians recognized that Eph 5:21 "teaches that we should all be subject to those whom God has put in authority over us." "For centuries," Grudem continues, this verse "was rightly

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[10] Piper and Grudem, *Recovering*, 493. Other scholars also appeal to the way in which ὑποτάσσω would have supposedly been heard by first-century Greek speakers and yet give no attention to the church fathers [so O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 403–4; Winger, *Ephesians*, 601]. Most discussions of this issue do not include any reference to the church fathers. The exceptions are noted below.

[11] "Myth," 224. So also Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 190–91. Here Grudem cites Daniel Doriani, "The Historical Novelty of Egalitarian Interpretations of Ephesians 5:21–22," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 203–19. In this article, Doriani demonstrates that prior generations of Christians did not understand Eph 5:21 to remove all sense of hierarchy from the marriage relationship. Nevertheless, Dorian also acknowledges that these Christians still interpreted Eph 5:21 as a call for mutual submission ["Historical Novelty," 210].

understood to mean, 'being subject to one another (that is, *some to others*).'"[12] Thus Grudem appears to believe that until the rise of modern feminism, Christians interpreted ἀλλήλοις in ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις to mean merely "some to others" instead of "everyone to everyone." This is simply not true. John Calvin, for example, never even considers the "some to others" interpretation that Grudem defends. While Calvin acknowledges that it may seem "strange at first glance" that Paul would require rulers to submit to their subjects, fathers to their children, and husbands to their wives, Calvin never questions that this mutual submission is precisely what the apostle envisions. Furthermore, Calvin argues that such a command is really quite sensible. Concerning husbands, Calvin reasons, "Is it not a subjection that the husband supports the frailty of his wife, and is prudent enough not to use rigour towards her, holding her as his companion, and taking upon him a part of her burden both in sickness and in health? Is that not a subjection?"[13]

Calvin, moreover, is certainly not the first to hold this view. In a search of the extant Greek literature prior to 500 CE, I find seven authors who espouse mutual submission: Origen, Basil the Great, Pseudo-Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Pseudo-Macarius, and Theodoret of Cyrus.[14] To this number we can also add Jerome. Though Jerome wrote his

[12] Grudem, "Myth," 225. Emphasis his.

[13] John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2017), 560–61 [Sermon 38]. See also John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 316–17.

[14] Ephesians 5:21 is cited by several other authors prior to 500 CE, but these authors do not provide enough commentary to determine their precise interpretations of ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 4.8.64.1; Theod. Mops. *Comm. Eph.* 5:21; Nilus *Ep.* 3.73.6–7).

commentary on Ephesians in Latin, he evidently worked from the Greek text.[15] In what follows, I will examine the relevant passages from each of these eight authors.

(1) In his commentary on Eph 5:21, Origen explains that both ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις in Eph 5:21 and δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις in Gal 5:13 require the same behavior (*Frag. comm. Eph.* 29.25–29). In Gal 5:13, ἀλλήλοις obviously means "everyone to everyone" and not merely "some to others."[16] Furthermore, Origen continues on to present both the apostles and Jesus as exemplars of the behavior required by Eph 5:21:

> Wherefore, the apostles "were slaves" to the churches "because of love" [Gal 5:13; cf. 1 Cor 9:19], ministering and being servants for the salvation of humanity. Even the Saviour assumed "the form of a slave" [Phil 2:7] for no other reason than to be a slave [δεδουλευκέναι] to the disciples. Consequently, he once "put water into a basin" to wash "the feet of the disciples" [John 13:5]. Furthermore, one who has understood the statement, "He who wishes to be great among you shall be the slave of all" [Matt 20:26–27], "will be subject" [ὑποτάσσεται] to serve [δουλεύειν] those whom it is necessary to serve. (29.29–34)[17]

In serving the churches, the apostles are not submitting to those who already had authority over them. Likewise, in serving his disciples, Jesus is not submitting to men who already had authority over him. Rather, Jesus is setting aside the privileges of his status and voluntarily placing himself in a position beneath his own disciples.

(2) In a discussion of the proper behavior for members of a monastic community, Gregory of Nyssa states that one should act as "a loyal and sincere slave [δοῦλος] of Christ who

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[15] For example, in his comments on *Eph 5:22*, Jerome notes that the verb "has been added in the Latin copies" but "is not contained in the Greek codices" (*Comm. Eph.* 5:22). Likewise, in his comments on Eph 6:9, Jerome discusses the meaning of the Greek word εὔνοια in Eph 6:7 (*Comm. Eph.* 6:9). Translation from Heine, *Origen and Jerome*, 233.

[16] For a detailed discussion of the relationship between Eph 5:21 and Gal 5:13, see Section 5.1.3.1 below.

[17] Translation from Heine, *Origen and Jerome*, 231–32. This passage is noted in Thielman, *Ephesians*, 374.

has been purchased for the common need of the brothers." Gregory supports this by citing Jesus' injunction to be a "slave of all" (πάντων δοῦλος; Mark 10:43–44; cf. Matt 20:26–27). Drawing upon the language of the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln,* Gregory continues on to explain that this "slavery" (τὴν δουλείαν) must not involve people pleasing or eye-service (ἀνθρωπάρεσκος and ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλείᾳ; cf. Col 3:22; Eph 6:6). Gregory then states, "It is necessary to submit to all [ὑποτετάχθαι πᾶσι] and ... to serve [θεραπεύειν] the brothers" (*De inst. Chr.* 8.1.67.13–68.13).[18] This clearly means that the members of the community are to submit to everyone in the community, not just to the community's leaders. The "all" in the phrase ὑποτετάχθαι πᾶσι is the same "all" that was referenced previously in the phrase πάντων δοῦλος.

(3) In his *Asketikon,* Basil the Great poses the following question: "The Apostle teaches us to be 'subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.' Therefore do we owe obedience [ὑπακούειν] to everyone and anyone who gives us orders?" Basil concludes that we do, provided that the orders do not conflict with the commandments of God (*SR* 114 [31:1160.1–46]). Thus Basil clearly believes Eph 5:21 requires submission to everyone in the community, not just submission to those who are in positions of authority. The next question Basil considers is the following: "How must we obey one another [ὑπακούειν ἀλλήλοις]?" Basil replies, "As slaves do their masters, just as the Lord prescribed." Here Basil cites both the command to be a "slave of all" in Mark 10:44 and the command to "serve one another" in Gal 5:13 (*SR* 115 [31:1161.1–11]).[19]

[18] The translation is my own. For a brief discussion of this passage, see Werner Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 113–14. Gregory of Nyssa lived ca. 330–395 CE.

[19] Translation taken with slight modification from Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great*, OECS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 335–36.

Elsewhere in the same work, Basil argues that all of our actions fall under one of two rules: either the explicit command of Scripture or the rule established in 1 Cor 10:23–24: "All things may be permissible for me but not all things are upbuilding; let no one seek his own advantage, but rather that of another's." Basil concludes,

> Thus it is necessary in every way either to be subject [ὑποτάσσεσθαι] to God according to his commandment, or to others because of his commandment, for it is written: 'subjecting yourselves to one another out of reverence for Christ' [Eph 5:21], and again the Lord says: 'Whoever wants to be great among you, let him become the last of all and the slave of all' [cf. Matt 20:26–27; Mark 9:35; 10:43–44; Luke 22:26]. (*SR* 1 [31:1081.29–38])[20]

Once again, Eph 5:21 is linked with the command to become a "slave of all" (Mark 10:44). Furthermore, Basil interprets the command to seek the good of others in 1 Cor 10:24 as a command to submit to others. In 1 Cor 10:24, these "others" are obviously not limited to those in positions of authority. Thus the connection with 1 Cor 10:24, like the connection with Mark 10:44, clearly indicates that Basil believes Eph 5:21 requires one to submit to everyone in the community, not just to those in positions of authority.

(4) In the *Monastic Constitutions*, Pseudo-Basil describes the members of the ideal community as both "slaves of one another" (ἀλλήλων ἰσόδουλοι) and "masters of one another" (ἀλλήλων κύριοι) who "in peaceable freedom exhibit in turn scrupulous slavery [δουλείαν] to one another." He goes on to explain that such slavery is not brought about by coercion, but is rather done willingly and joyfully, with "love submitting the free to one another" (ἀγάπης τοὺς ἐλευθέρους ὑποτασσούσης ἀλλήλοις; 31:1384.7–14).[21] The submission envisioned here is

[20] Translation taken with slight modification from Silvas, *Asketikon*, 275.

[21] The translation is my own. The *Monastic Constitutions* is thought to be the work of Eustathius of Sebaste (ca. 300 to after 377 CE) or a later author. See E. F. Morison, *St. Basil and His Rule: A Study in Early Monasticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), 18–19.

clearly mutual, not one-directional. Note also that mutual submission is once again associated with mutual slavery.

(5) In his exposition of Eph 5:21, Chrysostom writes the following:

> Let there be an interchange of slavery and submission [δουλείας καὶ ὑποταγῆς]. For then will there be no such thing as slavery [δουλεία]. Let not one sit down in the rank of a freeman, and the other in the rank of a slave; rather it were better that both masters and slaves be servants to one another [ἀλλήλοις δουλεύειν]. ... Thus does God will it to be; for this He washed His disciples' feet. ... But he [i.e. another Christian] does not choose to submit himself to you [σοι ὑποταγῆναι]? However you submit yourself [σὺ ὑποτάγηθι]; not simply yield [ὑπακούσῃς], but submit yourself [ὑποτάγηθι]. Entertain this feeling towards all, as if all were your masters. (*Hom. Eph.* 19 [62.134.28–59])[22]

Unlike Winger, Chrysostom clearly believes ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις requires "mutual submission within a single relationship."[23] Chrysostom specifically cites the master/slave relationship. Furthermore, Chrysostom states explicitly that one should submit to "all."

Note once again the connection between Eph 5:21 and Gal 5:13. Chrysostom links ὑποταγή with δουλεία and claims that ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις in Eph 5:21 requires people "to be slaves to one another" (ἀλλήλοις δουλεύειν; cf. δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις in Gal 5:13). Note also that while Chrysostom associates δουλεύω and ὑποτάσσω, he draws a distinction between ὑπακούω and ὑποτάσσω. He argues that Eph 5:21 requires one to "not simply yield [ὑπακούσῃς], but submit [ὑποτάγηθι]." The fact that Chrysostom considers ὑποτάσσω to be stronger than ὑπακούω suggests that he is fully aware of the hierarchical implications of ὑποτάσσω. Nevertheless, Chrysostom explicitly interprets ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις as mutual submission.

Elsewhere, in a homily on 1 Thess 4:1–8, Chrysostom encourages young men and women to have no sexual partners before marriage. According to Chrysostom, such abstinence

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[22] Translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 13:142. This passage is cited in Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 317. Cf. Chrys. *Hom. Eph.* 22 [62.157.19–22]; *Hom. 2 Cor.* 17 [61:521.27–33].

[23] Winger, *Ephesians*, 601.

will result in a better married life: "The bride and bridegroom will comply with one another, for both being inexperienced in the manners of others, they will submit to one another [ἀλλήλοις ὑποταγήσονται]" (*Hom. 1 Thess.* 5 [62.426.33–35]).[24] Here again we have a clear example of ὑποτάσσω being used to describe "mutual submission within a single relationship."[25]

Note also the voice of the verbs used by Chrysostom. In the Greek aorist and future tenses, the middle and passive voices have distinct forms. In the present tense, however, the middle and passive voices do not have distinct forms. Thus the voice of the present tense participle ὑποτασσόμενοι in Eph 5:21 is ambiguous.[26] Scholars occasionally suggest that the notion of mutual submission requires ὑποτασσόμενοι to have the middle voice.[27] However, recall that in Chrysostom's extended exposition of Eph 5:21, he uses the verbs ὑποταγῆναι and ὑποτάγηθι. Both are in the aorist tense and are thus unambiguously passive. Likewise, recall that when discussing mutual submission between the bride and bridegroom, Chrysostom uses the verb ὑποταγήσονται. Since it is in the future tense, this verb is also unambiguously passive. In

[24] Translation from *NPNF*[1] 13:346. Given the context of sexual relations, one may hear in this passage an echo of 1 Cor 7:4.

[25] The quoted phrase is from Winger, *Ephesians*, 600–601. Note that in Chrysostom's view, the husband stands in a position of authority over his wife. See *Hom. Eph.* 20 [62.136.33–5].

[26] Scholars who parse the verb as middle include O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 399–401; Karl L. Armstrong, "The Meaning of Ὑποτάσσω in Ephesians 5.21–33: A Linguistic Approach," *JGRChJ* 13 (2017): 152–71, esp. 163; Kelvin F. Mutter, "Ephesians 5:21–23 as Christian Alternative Discourse," *TRINJ* 39NS (2018): 3–20, esp. 13. Scholars who parse the verb as passive include Dawes, *Body*, 207–8; Winger, *Ephesians*, 601–2.

[27] See discussions in O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 400; Winger, *Ephesians*, 601–2; Armstrong, "Meaning," 163–66; Mutter, "Ephesians 5:21–23," 13–14. Note also the claim by Gregory W. Dawes: "To read ὑποτάσσεσθαι as the expression of a 'voluntary attitude' in the context of Eph 5:21 demands a middle reading" [*Body*, 208].

short, Chrysostom evidently does not think that the notion of mutual submission requires the middle form of ὑποτάσσω.[28]

(6) In his *Great Letter*, which addresses life in a monastic community, Pseudo-Macarius states that one should live "as a slave [δοῦλος] of Christ" who "willingly and joyfully" enters into this "good and profitable slavery [δουλείᾳ]."[29] Such a one should view all as "masters" (κυρίους) and render "all submission [ὑποταγὴν] to each one, but especially to the monks who lead" (257.16–258.8). Pseudo-Macarius encourages no one to "exalt himself over the other as greater and stronger." The leaders of the community should instead consider themselves "inferior to all men." This instruction is supported with citations of Luke 14:11, Mark 10:43–45/Matt 20:26–28, and 2 Cor 4:5. Pseudo-Macarius then exhorts the brothers "as imitators of Christ" to desire "submission and pleasant slavery [ὑποταγὴν καὶ χρηστὴν δουλείαν; cf. Matt 11:30] for the refreshment of one another." A few lines later, Pseudo-Macarius paraphrases Eph 5:21: "submitting to one another in the fear and love [ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ] of Christ" (260.9–261.8).[30] In summary, Pseudo-Macarius evidently believes that the command to submit to one another applies to everyone, even the leaders, and requires submission to all members of the community.

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[28] In the LXX and NT, the middle form is never used when ὑποτάσσω is in the aorist or future tenses. In general, middle forms of ὑποτάσσω are much less common in the extant literature then passive forms. For example, the future middle indicative third person plural form occurs only thrice in the entire TLG corpus (ὑποτάξονται [2x], ὑποταγοῦνται [1x]), while the future passive indicative third person plural form occurs 45 times (ὑποταγήσονται). For the use of ὑποτάσσω in the middle voice, see Hdn. 2.2.8.2–8 (φόβῳ ὑποτάξονται).

[29] Pesudo-Macarius writes in the fifth century [Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works*, 147, 189–90].

[30] The translation is my own. For more on the *Great Letter*, see Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works*, esp. 153–56. The insertion of "love" into the paraphrase of Eph 5:21 may reveal the influence of Gal 5:13 (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις). Ὑποτάσσω and ἀγάπη are joined elsewhere in the early Christian literature (Basil *Ep.* 65.1.10–11; 66.2.25; [*Const. asc.*] 31:1384.7–14; Athanas. [*Dial. duo*] 28:1321.32–33; cf. φιλαδελφία in Greg. Naz. *Or.* 17.6 [35.972.43–45]).

(7) In his commentary on Ephesians, Jerome relies heavily on Origen's earlier commentary. Jerome follows Origen in connecting Eph 5:21 with 1 Cor 9:19, Gal 5:13, Phil 2:7, John 13:5, and Matt 20:26–27. Furthermore, Jerome explicitly affirms that Eph 5:21 requires those in authority to submit to those who are under their authority. Jerome begins his comments on Eph 5:21 with this statement:

> Let the bishops hear these words, let the presbyters hear them, let every order of teachers hear them, that they be subjected to those who are subjected to themselves. ... This is the difference between the rulers of the Gentiles and of Christians. The former dominate their subjects but we serve.[31]

Jerome continues on to state that some interpret the connection between Eph 5:21 and the subsequent material as follows:

> This general notion [in Eph 5:21] is divided and distributed in the words which follow ... so that not only is a wife subject to her husband, and children to their parents, and servants to their masters, but also husbands are to be subject to their wives according to the duty which is commanded, and fathers to children so that they do not provoke them to wrath, and masters to servants that they may abstain from threats and offer them the necessary things of life which they possess. They should be subject to one another and do this from 'the fear of Christ' so that as he was subject to his servants, so also these who appear to be greater may be subject to those lesser than themselves by rending the duties which are commanded. (*Comm. Eph.* 5:21)[32]

(8) Concerning the transition from Eph 5:21 to 5:22, Theodoret of Cyrus states, "Since he made a general requirement of submission, he then recommends what is appropriate in each case" (*Interp. epist.* 82:545.42–44).[33] It is perhaps possible that by "each case" Theodoret refers

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[31] Translation from Heine, *Origen and Jerome*, 231. This passage is noted by Thielman, *Ephesians*, 373.

[32] Heine, *Origen and Jerome*, 232. Jerome attributes this interpretation to "another." Nevertheless, Jerome does not contradict this interpretation, and it is compatible with his own comments on the passage. On Jerome's interpretation of Eph 6:9, see Note 70 in Section 3.2.2 above.

[33] Hill, *Theodoret*, 2:52.

only to the three subordinate roles in the *Haustafel* (wife, child, and slave).[34] The more natural reading, however, is that "each case" refers to all six roles, including husband, father, and master. Thus Theodoret appears to hold the interpretation described above by Jerome.

Two conclusions emerge from this survey. First, the early Greek-speaking church evidently believed ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις required mutual submission. This undermines the assertions made by Grudem, Winger, and others concerning the way the phrase would have been understood by native Greek speakers. In my search of the extant Greek literature prior to 500 CE, I find no evidence that *anyone* held the "some to others" interpretation championed by these modern scholars. Second, submission is routinely linked with slavery. Again and again, Eph 5:21 is presented alongside Gal 5:13, Mark 10:44, and other passages which encourage one to voluntarily take the role of a slave. This well-attested connection between submission and slavery underscores the relevance of Eph 5:21 for the interpretation of Eph 6:9.

5.1.2. The Attested Use of ὑποτάσσω

According to Grudem, "No one has yet produced any examples in ancient Greek literature (either inside or outside the New Testament) where *hypotassō* is applied to a relationship between persons and where it does not carry the sense of being *subject to an authority*."[35] Elsewhere Grudem explains, "In every example we can find, when person A is said to 'be subject to' person B, person B has a unique authority which person A does not have. In other words, *hupotassō* always implies a one-directional submission to someone in authority." Since 1986, Grudem has been challenging others to prove him wrong by producing a counterexample. He maintains that no one has been able to show him any such passages "in *any*

[34] So Thielman, *Ephesians*, 373.

[35] Grudem, "Myth," 227.

literature *anywhere*, whether secular or Jewish or Christian." According to Grudem, ὑποτάσσω "is never used to speak of a reciprocal relationship between persons." Instead, the verb "always means to be *subject to someone else's authority*, in all Greek literature, Christian and non-Christian."[36] Similar statements appear throughout the scholarship on Eph 5:21.[37] Even many proponents of mutual submission appear to concede the point.[38]

I am surprised that this claim has persisted for so long, particularly given the fact that TLG has made the corpus of extant Greek literature immediately accessible to scholars. The passages surveyed above in Section 5.1.1 contain many examples which decisively refute Grudem's claim. Recall, for example, Chrysostom's explicit statement of mutual submission: "The bride and bridegroom ... will submit [ὑποταγήσονται] to one another" (*Hom. 1 Thess.* 5 [62.426.33–35]).[39] Likewise, recall Gregory's exhortation, "It is necessary to submit [ὑποτετάχθαι] to all" (*De inst. Chr.* 8.1.68.12). In context, this "all" clearly includes everyone in the community, not merely those who stand in positions of authority.

Furthermore, in addition to the discussions of mutual submission examined in Section 5.1.1 above, there are a number of other passages in which ὑποτάσσω is used to speak of one-directional submission to a non-authority. In other words, ὑποτάσσω in these passages is used to describe the submission which person A renders to person B, even though person B does not stand in a position of authority over person A. In what follows, I present five examples. These

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[36] Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 191–97. Emphasis his.

[37] See Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 53; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 401–3; Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 142–44; Walden, "Ephesians," 181; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 373; Winger, *Ephesians*, 600–602.

[38] See Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says About a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 154; Dawes, *Body*, 213; Belleville, "Egalitarian Perspective," 92–94; Helton, "Ephesians," 36–37.

[39] The translation of Gregory is my own. The translation of Chrysostom is from *NPNF*[1] 13:346.

examples come from Jewish, Christian, and pagan sources. Note that this list is representative, not comprehensive. The verb ὑποτάσσω occurs over 9,000 times in the TLG corpus, and additional examples could no doubt be found.

(1) While explaining his decision to take the initiative in seeking to heal a breach with Atarbius, the Bishop of Neo-Caesarea, Basil writes, "He who submits to his neighbor [τῷ πλησίον ὑποτασσόμενος] through charity is not humbled" (*Ep.* 65.1.10–11).[40] Thus Basil uses ὑποτάσσω to describe voluntary submission to a peer, not a superior. Furthermore, Basil acknowledges that Atarbius could have taken the initiative instead. Thus, while the submission Basil describes is not mutual, it could have gone in either direction.

(2) Antiochus Monachus (Strategius) gives the following exhortation to the one striving to attain the virtue of humility: "Let him be subject to his neighbor [ὑποτασσέσθω τῷ πλησίον], and let him be his slave [δουλευέτω αὐτῷ], remembering the Lord, who did not disdain to wash the feet of his disciples" (*Pand.* 70.75–77).[41] The submission which Antiochus envisions is clearly not directed only to those in authority. As in the passage from Basil cited above, ὑποτάσσω is used to describe submission to a "neighbor."[42] In fact, the reference to John 13 indicates that this submission includes not only submission to peers, but also submission to subordinates. Note also that the command to submit is once again connected with the language of slavery.

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[40] Translation from Agnes Clare Way, *Saint Basil: Letters, Volume I*, FC 13 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1951), 158.

[41] The translation is my own. Antiochus wrote in the seventh century [A. De Nicola, "Antiochus of Ptolemais," EAC 1:160].

[42] For the use of ὑποτάσσω to describe submission to a neighbor (πλησίον), see also 1 Clem. 38:1.

(3) In his *Life of Nicias*, Plutarch gives the following description of Nicias, an Athenian political and military leader from the fifth century BCE:

> The dignity of Nicias was not of the harsh, offensive sort, but was blended with much circumspection, and won control of the people from the very fact that he was thought to be afraid of them. Timid as he was by nature, and distrustful of success, in war he managed to succeed in hiding his cowardice under a cloak of good fortune, for he was uniformly successful as a general; while in political life his nervousness, and the ease with which he could be put to confusion by accusers, actually tended to make him popular, and gave him in high degree that power which comes from the favour of the people, because they fear men who scorn them, but exalt men who fear them. (2.4–6 [2.3–4])

Later on, Plutarch applies these words from Euripides to Nicias: "To the populace I'm a slave [δουλεύομεν]" (5.7 [5.4]). Plutarch also cites the following line from Phrynichus to confirm his portrait of Nicias: "He wouldn't cringe and creep [ὑποταγεὶς ἐβάδιζεν] as Nicias always does" (4.8 [4.6] [Perrin, LCL]). The phrase which the LCL edition renders, "cringe and creep," could more literally be rendered, "walk around being submissive."[43] Here the submission which is envisioned is clearly not submission to an authority. On the contrary, Plutarch is describing Nicias as submissive to his subordinates.[44]

(4) According to 2 Maccabees, the campaign which Antiochus Eupator launched against the Jews ended as follows:

> The king ... attacked Judas and his men, was defeated; he got word that Philip, who had been left in charge of the government, had revolted in Antioch; he was dismayed, called in the Jews, yielded [ὑπετάγη] and swore to observe all their rights, settled with them and offered sacrifice, honored the sanctuary and showed generosity to the holy place. (13:22–23)

Obviously, the Jews do not stand in a position of authority over Antiochus.

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[43] In the LCL edition of Phrynichus, the phrase is rendered, "walk around with a hangdog look" (Frag. 59 [62; Storey, LCL]).

[44] For the use of ὑποτάσσω to describe political leaders submitting to the populace, see also Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 5.67.4.

(5) The Letter of Aristeas includes the following exchange:

> [The king] asked another guest, "How can one find welcome abroad among strangers?" "By equal treatment to everyone," he replied, "and by appearing inferior rather than superior to those among whom he is a stranger. For, in general, God by his very nature welcomes that which is humbled, and the human race deals kindly with those in subjection [τοὺς ὑποτασσομένους]." (257)[45]

Here ὑποτάσσω is used to describe the state of one who voluntarily adopts a lower position. The strangers among whom this person sojourns clearly do not stand in a position of authority over him.

In conclusion, while ὑποτάσσω is frequently used to describe "one-directional submission to someone in authority," Grudem's claim that the word "always implies" such submission is demonstrably false.[46] The extant literature reveals that ὑποτάσσω is more flexible than Grudem imagines. The term is sometimes used to describe submission to a peer or even an inferior. Moreover, in the Christian literature, the term is sometimes used to describe mutual submission.

5.1.3. Pauline Parallels to Ephesians 5:21

In the previous section, I challenged Grudem's assertion that ὑποτάσσω "always implies a one-directional submission to someone in authority."[47] The term itself does not indicate if one is subject to an authority, a peer, or a subordinate. One must look to the context to answer that question. Nevertheless, while I have demonstrated that ὑποτάσσω does not always imply an

[45] Translation from *OTP* 2:29–30. For a discussion of this passage, see Kamlah, "'Υποτάσσεσθαι," 242. See also the discussion in Section 5.1.3.2 below.

[46] Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 193. In addition to the passages cited in Note 6 above, the following are examples in which ὑποτάσσω is used to describe submission to authority: Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 1.24.159.6; 7.1.3.2; Greg. Naz. *Or.* 17.6 [35.972.43–45]; Basil *Ep.* 92.3.34–35.

[47] Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 193.

authority, I do not deny that ὑποτάσσω always implies a *hierarchy*. The term indicates that one person or thing is in some sense ordered below another person or thing.[48] Thus I agree with Grudem that the notion of mutual submission is inherently self-contradictory. How can A be ordered below B while B is simultaneously ordered below A?

This paradox, however, is not unique to Eph 5:21. It appears elsewhere in the Pauline epistles, most notably in Gal 5:13 (δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις) and Phil 2:3 (ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν). The similarity between Eph 5:21 and these two passages is often noted by defenders of mutual submission.[49] However, no one in this debate has yet examined the similarities between the use of the verb ὑποτάσσω and the uses of the verbs δουλεύω and ὑπερέχω in the extant Greek literature. In this section, I will examine these similarities and demonstrate that the language employed in Gal 5:13 and Phil 2:3 involves the same paradox found in Eph 5:21.

5.1.3.1. Mutual Slavery in Galatians 5:13

As discussed in Section 5.1.1 above, the early church fathers routinely associate Gal 5:13 with Eph 5:21 and occasionally merge the two, as if both verses expressed the same command. This is not surprising, for in the extant Greek literature, the active form of δουλεύω and the middle or passive form of ὑποτάσσω sometimes appear as near synonyms. Plutarch, for example, discusses Plato's advice not "to subjugate oneself and play the slave" (ὑποτετάχθαι καὶ δουλεύειν; *Plat. Q.* 3.2 [*Mor.* 1002E; Cherniss, LCL]). Likewise, to the one who fails to "eradicate desire utterly," Epictetus declares, "You are a slave, you are a subject" (ἐδούλευσας,

[48] So Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 317.

[49] So Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366; Dawes, *Body*, 213–14; Marshall, "Mutual Love," 197.

ὑπετάγης; *Diatr*. 4.4.33 [Oldfather, LCL]).[50] Similar examples can be found in the Christian literature. According to the Shepherd of Hermas, you can gain mastery over evil desire "if you are enslaved [δουλεύσῃς] to the good desire and submit [ὑποταγῇς] to it" (Mand. 12.2.5 [Ehrman, LCL]). Theodore of Mopsuestia cites the following line from Psalm 71:11: "All the nations will serve [δουλεύσουσιν] him" (MT 72:11). Theodore then offers this interpretation: "All will be subject [ὑποταγήσονται] to him, and not make war" (*Exp. ps.* 71.11b).[51] Recall also the words of Antiochus Monachus, discussed in Section 5.1.2 above: "Let him be subject [ὑποτασσέσθω] to his neighbor, and let him be his slave [δουλευέτω αὐτῷ]" (*Pand.* 70.75–76).[52]

In fact, it is quite possible that the command in Gal 5:13 would have been heard in the first century as stronger and more surprising than the command in Eph 5:21.[53] In the extant literature, a distinction is occasionally drawn between being a slave to someone and merely being subordinate to that person. For example, Diodorus Siculus explains that when King Evagoras was forced to surrender to the Persians, he was willing to accept the imposed tribute, but "he refused to obey orders as slave [δοῦλον] to master, saying that he should be subject [ὑποτετάχθαι] as king to king" (15.8.3 [Oldfather, LCL]). Thus merely being subject to someone is evidently not considered as humiliating as being that person's slave. Similarly, Josephus asserts that the handmaids of Leah and Rachel were "in no way slaves [δοῦλαι] but subordinates [ὑποτεταγμέναι]" (*Ant.* 1.303 [Thackeray, LCL]).

Perhaps the most decisive critique of Grudem's argument is the simple observation that many of the specific assertions which he and other scholars make concerning ὑποτάσσω could be

[50] See also Jos. *War* 2.361; Epict. *Diatr*. 3.24.71; Sib. Or. 11.76–78.

[51] The translation is my own.

[52] The translation is my own.

[53] So Marshall, "Mutual Love," 197.

applied with equal validity to δουλεύω. Like ὑποτάσσω, the verb δουλεύω does not mean merely, "be thoughtful and considerate; act in love."[54] The word δουλεύω implies a hierarchy in which one serves and another is served. Thus, borrowing Piper and Grudem's phrasing, δουλεύω "is never 'mutual' in its force; it is *always one-directional*."[55] Borrowing Winger's phrasing, δουλεύω implies an order in which "it is impossible simultaneously to hold both upper and lower ranks."[56] Borrowing John G. Nordling's phrasing, δουλεύω "does not describe 'symmetrical' relationships at all, but rather *ordered* relationships wherein some persons are 'over' and others 'under.'"[57] Nevertheless, the phrase δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις obviously refers to mutual slavery. Galatians 5:13 does not mean merely, "Those of you who are slaves should serve others among you who are masters."

In his critique of mutual submission, Stephen B. Clark attempts to draw a distinction between submission and service:

> A servant is subordinate, but not to everyone he serves. When a servant waits on table, he serves the guests and he serves the master. But he serves the guests in a different way than the way he serves the master as master. The guests do not give him direction. They only make requests. It is the master that he is subordinate to.[58]

I affirm this distinction, but Clark has not reckoned with the fact that Gal 5:13 requires believers to do more than merely serve other Christians; the verse requires believers to be *enslaved* to other Christians. The Greek verb δουλεύω in Gal 5:13 is stronger than the English verb "serve." Recall the distinction made by Theodoret: "Not for them to be enslaved [δουλεύσωσιν] but for

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[54] The quoted phrase is from Piper and Grudem, *Recovering*, 493.

[55] Piper and Grudem, *Recovering*, 493. Emphasis theirs.

[56] Winger, *Ephesians*, 602.

[57] Nordling, "Research Note," 330.

[58] Clark, *Man and Woman*, 76.

them to render service [θεραπεύσωσι]" (*Interp. epist.* 82:552.15–16).[59] Note also that in Galatians, the verb δουλεύω is always used to describe someone who is explicitly said to be in a state of slavery. In Gal 4:7–9, Paul writes, "You are no longer a slave [δοῦλος] but a child. ... Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved [ἐδουλεύσατε] to beings that by nature are not gods. ... How can you want to be enslaved [δουλεύειν] to them again?"[60] Likewise, in 4:25–26, Paul contrasts the earthly Jerusalem which is "in slavery [δουλεύει] with her children" and the heavenly Jerusalem which "is free [ἐλευθέρα]." Moreover, this contrast between slavery and freedom which has dominated Paul's argument continues on into 5:13: "For you were called to freedom [ἐλευθερίᾳ], brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom [τὴν ἐλευθερίαν] as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another [δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις]."[61] As Clark recognizes, a slave is subordinate to his or her master. Thus, by Clark's own logic, we must conclude that Gal 5:13 requires mutual submission.

5.1.3.2. Mutual Inferiority in Philippians 2:3

The phrase ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν in Phil 2:3 offers another striking parallel to Eph 5:21, for the verbs ὑπερέχω and ὑποτάσσω are occasionally used together to describe the role of both parties in a hierarchy. Paul himself uses this combination in Rom 13:1:

[59] Translation from Hill, *Theodoret*, 54. See Section 3.2.7 above.

[60] Note also the similar use of δουλόω in Gal 4:3.

[61] In addition to Gal 5:13, Mark 10:43–44 explicitly requires one to be, not merely a servant (διάκονος) of all, but a slave (δοῦλος) of all. Commentators routinely note that the term δοῦλος is stronger than διάκονος. So Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 119; James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 326; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 419; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 499; Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 748.

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities [ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτασσέσθω]" (NRSV). Likewise, the author of 1 Peter writes, "Be subject [ὑποτάγητε] for the Lord's sake ... to the emperor as supreme [ὡς ὑπερέχοντι]" (2:13; RSV). The use of ὑπερέχω with ὑποτάσσω to describe both sides of a hierarchical relationship is also found in the *Testament of Judah*. The author explains that God "has subjected [ὑπέταξε] the kingship to the priesthood," for "as heaven is superior to the earth [ὑπερέχει ... τῆς γῆς], so is God's priesthood superior to the kingdom on earth [ὑπερέχει ... τῆς ἐπὶ γῆς βασιλείας]" (21:2–4).[62] Now if Paul can use ὑπερέχω with ἀλλήλων to express the notion that two Christians should act as if the other occupies a higher position (Phil 2:3), then we should not be surprised if the author of Ephesians uses ὑποτάσσω with ἀλλήλων to express the notion that two Christians should each submit to the other. The command ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις in Eph 5:21 is the natural corollary of the command ἀλλήλους ἡγούμενοι ὑπερέχοντας ἑαυτῶν in Phil 2:3. Philippians 2:3 exhorts one to give another the higher position; Eph 5:21 exhorts one to take the lower position. Thus the commands are two sides of the same coin.

The natural connection between the language of Phil 2:3 and Eph 5:21 is demonstrated most clearly by the following passage from the Letter of Aristeas, which was cited earlier:

> [The king] asked another guest, "How can one find welcome abroad among strangers?" "By equal treatment to everyone," he replied, "and by appearing inferior rather than superior [καθυπερέχων] to those among whom he is a stranger. For, in general, God by his very nature welcomes that which is humbled [τὸ ταπεινούμενον], and the human race deals kindly with those in subjection [τοὺς ὑποτασσομένους]." (257)[63]

In addition to the middle/passive form of ὑποτάσσω, note the striking verbal similarity with Phil 2:3: "In humility [τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ] regard others as better [ὑπερέχοντας] than yourselves."

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[62] Translation from *OTP* 1:800. Another example of this use of ὑπερέχω with ὑποτάσσω is found in Diod. Sic. 34/35.2.33.10–16.

[63] Translation from *OTP* 2:29–30. See the discussion in Section 5.1.2 above.

Both Paul and Aristeas encourage humility, with Paul using the noun ταπεινοφροσύνη and Aristeas using the related verb ταπεινόω. Likewise, both Paul and Aristeas encourage one to grant others a higher position, with Paul using ὑπερέχω and Aristeas using a compound form of the same verb (καθυπερέχω).

In conclusion, Grudem complains that the notion of mutual submission is "self-contradictory," and Winger likewise labels mutual submission an "oxymoron."[64] However, mutual submission is no more of an oxymoron than the notion of mutual slavery which Paul proclaims in Gal 5:13 or the notion of mutual inferiority which he proclaims in Phil 2:3. If two people can simultaneously be enslaved to each other and simultaneous place the other in a higher position, then there is no reason why two people cannot simultaneously submit to one another.[65]

5.1.4. The Attested Use of ἀλλήλων

As Grudem and other critics of mutual submission correctly observe, the phrase ἵνα ἀλλήλους σφάξουσιν in Rev 6:4 does not indicate that every person kills every other person. Here, as in many other passages, ἀλλήλων is indeed used to describe action that is not performed by everyone in the group. However, what these scholars fail to appreciate is that the notion of "some to others" found in Rev 6:4 is fundamentally different from the notion of "some to others" which they propose in Eph 5:21. In passages such as Rev 6:4, the action *could* be done by any member in the group towards any other member in the group. From John's perspective, there is no reason why any particular person could not kill any other person. The same point holds for the

[64] Grudem, "Myth," 229; Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism,* 198–99; Winger, *Ephesians*, 669.

[65] In Phil 2:3 Paul says that Christians should "regard" one another as superior. Thus he does not make the logically contradictory assertion that A actually is superior to B while B actually is superior to A. However, the command still requires two Christians to simultaneously place the other in the higher position. Thus the command involves the same paradox found in a command for two Christians to simultaneously take the lower position.

other examples cited. Consider Paul's command in 1 Cor 11:33: "Wait for one another" (ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε). Of course Grudem is correct in his observation that only those who arrive early wait; those who arrive late do not wait.[66] Once again, however, any person in the group could arrive early, and any person could arrive late. Thus, depending on the circumstances, any one person might have to wait for any other person.

However, according to the interpretation defended by Grudem and others, the situation is much different in Eph 5:21. These scholars insist that the husband will never under any circumstances submit to his wife. Thus, in order to demonstrate that the use of ἀλλήλων which they propose is not entirely unattested, these scholars need to produce a passage which displays the same type of "some to others" which they propose for Eph 5:21. In other words, these scholars need to find an example in which the action of the verb associated with ἀλλήλων cannot under any circumstances be done by a certain class of people in the group towards another class of people in the group. Thus far, no one has produced such a passage.

5.1.5. The Context of Ephesians 5:21

It is certainly true that some degree of tension exists between the concept of mutual submission and the household hierarchies outlined in Eph 5:22–6:9.[67] This tension, however, is

[66] Grudem, "Myth," 229.

[67] This tension is routinely discussed by scholars [so Gielen, *Tradition*, 223; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 372]. Thomas R. Schreiner acknowledges that Eph 5:21 requires mutual submission, but asserts, "It is doubtful ... that the content of 5:21 should be read into the exhortations that follow. Otherwise, Paul would be suggesting that parents and children (6:1–4) and masters and slaves (vv. 5–9) should mutually submit to each other" ["Women in Ministry: Another Complementarian Perspective," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck, 2nd ed., Counterpoints, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 265–322, esp. 300]. However, the content of 5:21 is quite literally "read into" the exhortations that follow! The command in Eph 5:22 does not contain a verb; the verb must be supplied from ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις. Thus 5:21 cannot be easily divorced from the *Haustafel*. On the evidence for the

not unique to Ephesians; it is implicit elsewhere in the NT. As Ernest Best observes in his comments on Eph 5:21, "Early Christianity contains an unresolved tension between authority and mutuality."[68] Consider again Gal 5:13. Though the words δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις are directed to the entire community, Paul surely believes that parents stand in a position of authority over their children. How can the notion of mutual slavery be reconciled with such a hierarchy? In other words, how can a father exert his proper authority over his child and yet at the same time act as his child's slave? Thus the juxtaposition of ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις and the Ephesian *Haustafel* does not introduce some new difficulty but merely brings to the forefront a tension which is already latent in Pauline ethics.

Furthermore, the tension between ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις and the subsequent *Haustafel* should not be overstated. The author explicitly cites the self-giving love of Christ as the model for the love which the husband is to have for his wife (Eph 5:25). Recall that in the gospels, Jesus is presented as a model for the one who is to be a "slave of all" precisely because he gives "His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42–45; cf. Matt 20:25–28). Thus it is no very great stretch to see the husband's love for his wife as a form of submission to her.[69]

Moreover, the context of Eph 5:21 poses three substantial difficulties for the interpretation defended by Grudem and others. First, in every other occurrence of ἀλλήλων in Ephesians, the pronoun is clearly used to mean "everyone to everyone" and not merely "some to

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omission of the verb in Eph 5:22, see the discussion in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994), 541.

[68] Best, *Ephesians*, 517. As an example of this tension, scholars often cite 1 Peter 5:5, where the command to submit to elders is juxtaposed with the universal command to display humility towards all [so Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366; Dawes, *Body*, 214; Marshall, "Mutual Love," 197].

[69] So Mark J. Keown: "Living the Christ pattern of total self-giving is effectively submission" ["Paul's Vision," 55].

others": ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπη (4:2); ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη (4:25); γίνεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοι (4:32).[70]

Second, ὑποτασσόμενοι is the last in a series of five participles modifying the command, πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι (5:18). This command is of course binding on everyone in the community, and each of the first four participles modifying this command describes action which is clearly expected of everyone in the community.[71] Thus the context naturally suggests that ὑποτασσόμενοι also describes an action which is to be taken by everyone in the community. Recall Piper and Grudem's paraphrase: "Those who are under authority should be subject to others among you who have authority over them."[72] Such a paraphrase suggests that the command only applies to a segment of the community, namely, those who are in subordinate positions. Now to be fair, one could construct a similar paraphrase that preserves the universality of the command: "Each one of you should be subject to those in the community who have authority over you."[73] Such an interpretation, however, would require us to posit that the author is envisioning church leaders who exert authority over even the male householders. This is certainly possible, but nothing in the context suggests such a concern. The author focuses exclusively on household hierarchies. When he addresses the husband/father/master, he does not tell him to submit to the church leaders; rather, he tells him how to act towards the people over whom he has authority.

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[70] This point is routinely noted by scholars. So Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 317; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 373.

[71] This point is routinely noted by scholars. So Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 317; Dawes, *Body*, 214–16.

[72] Piper and Grudem, *Recovering*, 493–94.

[73] Doriani gives this interpretation of Eph 5:21: "All Christians should submit to those who have authority over them" ["Historical Novelty," 210].

This leads to the third and final point. The command ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις is immediately followed by pairs of *reciprocal* exhortations. In his argument against mutual submission in Eph 5:21, Andrew Perriman states: "Although *allēlois* would normally indicate reciprocal action of some sort, this idea is certainly not reflected in the instructions to various household members that follow."[74] On the contrary, "reciprocal action" forms the very structure of the *Haustafel*.

In order to appreciate the problems which the structure and content of the *Haustafel* pose for the one-directional reading of ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις, compare Eph 5:21–6:9 with the similar content in 1 Peter 2:13–3:7. The passage in 1 Peter opens with an unambiguous call for submission to those in authority: "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (1 Pet 2:13; RSV). Unlike Eph 5:21, the command in 1 Pet 2:13 is supported by a series of instructions which describe how *everyone* in the community should submit to the appropriate authority. The author includes instructions to slaves and women which are quite similar to the instructions found in the Ephesian *Haustafel*, but he also identifies political authorities to whom even the free men must submit. Furthermore, while the Ephesian *Haustafel* is structured around reciprocal relationships, 1 Peter does not mention the duty of the master towards the slave, and the duty of the husband towards the wife appears only at the end of the passage, where it does not interrupt the instructions concerning submission. Note also that if one counts the words in Eph 5:22–6:9, the instructions to the superordinate member concerning the treatment of the subordinate member account for 59% of the text.[75] By contrast, if one counts the words in 1 Pet 2:13–3:7, the instructions to the superordinate member concerning the treatment of the

[74] Perriman, *Speaking of Women*, 52.

[75] The instructions addressed to the superordinate members of the household (Eph 5:25–33; 6:4; 6:9) contain 194 words, and the entire passage contains 328 words.

subordinate member account for only 8% of the text.[76] In short, while the content and structure of 1 Peter 2:13–3:7 indicate an emphasis on one-directional submission to authority, the content and structure of the Ephesian *Haustafel* do not indicate such an emphasis. No authority is mentioned to whom the husband/father/master must submit, over half of the code (59%) does not concern submission to an authority, and the structure of the code is reciprocal, not unilateral.

5.2. Mutual Slavery in the New Testament

In Section 5.1, I demonstrated that Eph 5:21 requires mutual submission. In that discussion, I also observed a close connection between mutual submission and mutual slavery. I turn now to consider the latter in more detail.

The notion that Christians should serve each other as διάκονοι or even δοῦλοι is reflected in many passages throughout the NT.[77] Often the emphasis is on one in a higher position serving those in a lower position. In all four gospels, Jesus exhorts his followers to serve each other and presents himself as the exemplar of such behavior.[78] Furthermore, Jesus' voluntary servitude is associated with the cross, which of course plays a central role in Christian theology.[79] Likewise in Philippians, Jesus' act of voluntarily assuming "the form of a slave" and dying on the cross is

[76] The instructions addressed to the superordinate members of the household (1 Pet 3:7) contain 25 words, and the entire passage contains 314 words.

[77] See Matt 20:25–28; Mark 10:42–45; Luke 22:25–27; John 13:1–15; Rom 12:7; 15:25, 31; 16:1; 1 Cor 9:19; 16:15; 2 Cor 3:3; 4:5; 8:4; 9:1; 11:8; Eph 4:12; Phlm 13; Heb 6:10; 1 Pet 4:10–11; etc.

[78] See Matt 20:25–28; Mark 10:42–45; Luke 22:25–27; John 13:1–15; cf. Rom 15:8. On foot-washing as the duty of a slave, see Plut. *Pomp.* 73.7.

[79] The connection is explicit in Matthew and Mark, and in Luke and John, the passages describing the servitude of Jesus occur during the last supper. As Craig S. Keener observes, the introduction in John 13:1–3 suggests that "John invites us to read the foot washing in view of the cross" [*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 2:907].

presented as a model for his followers, who are exhorted to humbly put others above themselves (Phil 2:1–8).[80]

The prominence of servitude in Christian thought is reflected in the unusually heavy use of διάκονος and its cognates in the NT, particularly in the Pauline epistles.[81] As shown in Table 5.1 below, the terms διάκονος, διακονέω, and διακονία occur much more frequently in Paul than in the contemporaneous literature.[82] These terms occur 36 times more often in the Pauline epistles than they do in the non-Christian literature surveyed in the table (16.04/0.44 = 36).

[80] Cicero describes crucifixion as "the worst extreme of the tortures we inflict on slaves" (*Verr.* 2.169 [Greenwood, LCL]). Ernst Käsemann and R. P. Martin have challenged the notion that Jesus is presented as an ethical example in Phil 2:5–11 [Ernst Käsemann, "A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5–11," in *God and Christ: Existence and Province*, trans. Alice F. Carse, *JTC* 5 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1968), 45–88, esp. 84; R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi: Philippians ii. 5–11 in Recent Interpretation and in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 287–89]. However, as Markus Bockmuehl correctly argues, the "close parallels" between 2:6–11 and 2:1–4 "clearly suggest that he [i.e. Paul] is wanting to draw ethical consequences for the attitude of Christians from the example of the attitude displayed by Jesus" [*The Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 122; see also L. W. Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5–11," in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, ed. Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 113–26]. Scholars remain divided on the question of whether or not Phil 2:6–11 is a Pauline composition or a pre-Pauline hymn adapted by Paul [Paul A. Holloway, *Philippians: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 115].

[81] In a discussion of Phlm 13, Katherine A. Shaner asserts, "διακονέω connotes cultic practices rather than menial service for daily activities. This set of words [i.e. διακονέω and cognates] has a particular technical meaning relating to the work and/or activities of various groups in Christ" [Katherine A. Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 59–60]. Regardless of what particular service Onesimus performed for Paul, the Christian use of διακονέω and cognates is clearly not restricted to cultic work. These terms are often used in the NT to refer to servants (Matt 20:26–28; 22:13; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43–45; Luke 17:8 John 2:5, 9; 12:2) or "menial service" (Matt 8:15; 25:44; 27:55; Mark 1:31; 15:41; Luke 4:39; 8:3; 10:40; 12:37; Acts 2:1–2). Note also that Paul uses διάκονος in reference to a secular official (Rom 13:4).

[82] Of the 52 occurrences in the Pauline epistles, the breakdown is as follows: διακονία (23x); διάκονος (21x); διακονέω (8x).

Table 5.1. Servant/Slave Language in the NT and Contemporaneous Literature[83]

	Total Word Count	Occurrences of διάκονος, διακονέω, or διακονία		Occurrences of δοῦλος, δουλεύω, δουλόω, or δουλεία	
		Total	Per 10,000 Words	Total	Per 10,000 Words
Gospels and Acts	83151	41	4.93	87	10.46
Pauline Epistles	32,410	52	16.04	59	18.20
Hebrews to Revelation	22377	7	3.13	21	9.38
New Testament Total	**137,938**	**100**	**7.25**	**167**	**12.11**
Josephus	475,709	69	1.45	229	4.81
LXX	623,781	7	0.11	644	10.32
Philo	449,267	11	0.24	272	6.05
Pseudo-Phocylides	1,588	0	0.00	2	12.59
Lucian	281,064	30	1.07	64	2.28
Plutarch	1,036,815	22	0.21	259	2.50
Dio Chrysostom	179,346	13	0.72	144	8.03
Epictetus	89,213	12	1.35	104	11.66
Diodorus Siculus	464,305	10	0.22	142	3.06
Dionysius of Halicarnassus	415,573	4	0.10	124	2.98
Musonius Rufus	17,907	0	0.00	14	7.82
Non-Christian Total	**4,034,568**	**178**	**0.44**	**1,998**	**4.95**

As shown in the table, Paul also uses δοῦλος language more than his contemporaries, though the disparity is not as stark. More distinctive than the frequency of δοῦλος or δουλεύω in the NT is the particular use of these terms to describe the service which Christians should render to one another (Matt 20:27; Mark 10:44; 1 Cor 9:19; 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 5:13). Most occurrences of δοῦλος language in the NT are not particularly unusual. The LXX provides a precedent for the frequent description of people in the NT as δοῦλοι of God and/or Jesus.[84] Likewise, just as the

[83] This table was created with data from the digital TLG corpus.

[84] In the NT, see Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 7:22; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; Col 4:12; Tit 1:1; James 1:1; 1 Pet 2:16; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev 2:20; 7:3; 15:3; 19:1–2; etc. For people as δοῦλοι of God in the LXX, see Josh 24:30; 2 Kings 9:7; 18:12; Psa 35:1; 133:1; 134:1; Jonah 1:9; etc. Other passages from Jewish literature which use such language include Philo *Heir* 7; Jos. *Ant.* 11.101; Pss. Sol. 18:12. Similar language appears infrequently in Greco-Roman sources. Plato encourages slavery

NT speaks of slavery to sin, both Jewish and Greco-Roman authors routinely discuss slavery to vice or passion.[85] Nevertheless, parallels to the use of δοῦλος language in passages such as Mark 10:44 and Gal 5:13 are difficult to find.

Perhaps the closest parallel is found in Aelian. Aelian approvingly records an episode in which King Antigonus, upon observing his son abusing their subjects, scolded him with these words: "Don't you know, my boy, that our monarchy is a glorious form of servitude [δουλείαν]?" (*Var. hist.* 2.20 [Wilson, LCL]).[86] The notion that a leader is a slave to his subjects is certainly quite similar to both Jesus' teaching that the greatest in the community is a "slave of all" (Mark 10:42–45) and Paul's presentation of himself as a slave (1 Cor 9:19; 2 Cor 4:5). Nevertheless, Antigonus' words apply to the specific role of a ruler and thus do not provide a parallel to the general requirement in Gal 5:13 for all Christians to be slaves to one another.

A final point must be made which is of particular importance for the interpretation of Eph 6:9. In Galatians, Paul explicitly states that his audience includes slaves (Gal 3:27–28). Thus one cannot escape the conclusion that Gal 5:13 requires masters to serve slaves. Now of course one may question how this ideal was understood and implemented in the community. We may safely assume, for example, that neither Paul nor his listeners expected parents to abandon discipline and obey the capricious demands of their young children. As observed in Section 5.1.5 above,

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(δουλεία) to God (*Ep.* 354E). Though he never uses δοῦλος language to describe such slavery, Epictetus speaks of a servant (διάκονος) of God (*Diatr.* 3.24.65; 4.7.20) and the service (διακονία) of God (*Diatr.* 3.22.69). See Garnsey, *Ideas*, 18.

[85] In the NT, see Rom 6:6, 16–20; 7:25; 16:18; Titus 3:3; 2 Pet 2:19. In non-Christian sources, see Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 2.107; *Good Person* 136; Plut. *Conj. praec.* 33 [*Mor.* 142E]; Sen. Y. *Ep.* 40.19; etc.

[86] Cited in Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 100. The image of a ruler as a "slave" to his subjects is used negatively in Plut. *Nic.* 5.7 [5.4]. See the discussion in Section 5.1.2 above.

Paul does not explain in Galatians how mutual slavery is to be realized within household authority structures. Nevertheless, the point remains that Gal 5:13 requires masters to, at least in some sense, serve their Christian slaves.

5.3. Relaxing the Threat

Before drawing conclusions concerning the meaning of the command, τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτούς, some attention must be given to the subsequent phrase, ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν (Eph 6:9). As discussed in Chapter 2, scholars disagree on the correct interpretation of this phrase. Some argue that ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν merely prohibits excessive or particularly harsh threats, while others argue that these words constitute a blanket prohibition of all punishment.[87]

The more radical interpretation has much to commend it. If the threat is prohibited, then surely the execution of the threat is also prohibited.[88] Note the contrast between threats and whipping in Prov 17:10: "A threat [ἀπειλὴ] shatters the heart of a prudent person, but a fool, though whipped, does not comprehend" (NETS). It would be strange indeed if masters were forbidden from using the former but not the latter. Furthermore, in the absence of some qualifier in the text, limiting τὴν ἀπειλήν to "idle threats" which "were made merely to engender fear"

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[87] See Section 2.3.5 above. Other passages which speak of threats (ἀπειλαί) to slaves include Plut. *Contr. A.* 10 [458F–459B]; Diod. Sic. 37.13.2; Philo *Virtues* 124. On the terror of slaves who are about to be whipped, see Chrys. *Hom. Gen.* 17.7; Petron. *Sat*. 30; Hor. *Ep.* 2.2.13–15. On slaves fleeing masters out of fear, see Philo *Flight* 3; Plut. *Contr. A.* 10 [458F–459B]. On the extreme brutality which some masters exhibit towards slaves, see Dio Cass. 54.23.1–3; Sen. Y. *Clem*. 1.18.1–2; *Ira* 3.32.1–2, 40.2–5; Cic. *Verr.* 2.169; Plut. *Cor.* 24.3–4; Galen *Passions* 4; Juv. *Sat*. 6.475–95. On slaves being harshly punished for menial offences, see also Plut. *Cat. Maj*. 21.3. The passage from Galen was brought to my attention by Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery: A Sourcebook* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 180–81. For a translation of Galen, see Paul W. Harkins, *Galen: On the Passions and Errors of the Soul* (Ohio State University Press, 1963), 25–69, esp. 37–41. For a translation of Chrysostom, see Robert C. Hill, *Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, FC 74 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

[88] So Best, *Ephesians*, 581; Fowl, *Ephesians*, 197.

seems rather arbitrary.[89] Harold W. Hoehner argues that masters could not have reasonably been expected to relinquish all threats, because they would have then been unable to control their slaves.[90] However, as discussed in Section 4.3.1 above, Seneca praises Lucilius for abandoning the whip and seeking to be loved by his slaves rather than feared (*Ep.* 47.19).[91] Similarly, Diogenes Laertius asserts that the one who lives according to the precepts of Epicurus and his school will not "punish his servants" (10.118 [Hicks, LCL]).[92] Thus the notion that slaves could be managed without punishment, while unusual, is not entirely unattested.[93]

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[89] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 814. See also Best, *Ephesians*, 581; O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 454; Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 90; Martinsen, "New Life," 60.

[90] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 814. Upon seeing a Spartan beating a slave, Demonax is said to have declared, "Stop treating him as your equal [ὁμότιμον]!" (Lucian *Demon.* 46 [Harmon, LCL]). (The Spartans were subjected to whippings as part of their rigorous training.) This quip by Demonax suggests that the philosopher disapproves of the Spartan's behavior. As R. Bracht Branham explains, Demonax is suggesting "that whoever beats his slave is himself no better than a slave" ["Authorizing Humor: Lucian's Demonax and Cynic Rhetoric," *Semeia* 64 (1993): 33–48, esp. 44]. This passage was brought to my attention by Keener, who pointed me to the discussion in Lars Hartman, *Mark for the Nations: A Text- and Reader-Oriented Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 441.

[91] Cf. Sen. Y. *Ira* 3.24.2–3.

[92] The passage was brought to my attention by Keener, *Paul*, 201.

[93] See the discussion in Section 4.3.1. Throughout the literature, masters are routinely discouraged against excessive harshness and brutality (Sir 4:30; 7:20; 33:31–33; Ps.-Phoc. 223–27; Philo *Decalogue* 167; Plato *Leg.* 777D–E; Diod. Sic. 34/35.2.25–27, 32–37; Sen. Y. *Ep.* 47; *Ira* 3.24.2–3; 3.32.1–2; *Clem.* 1.18.1–3; *Ben.* 3.22.3; Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 20.13.3; Epict. *Diatr.* 1.13; Diog. Laert. 10.10, 118; Gaius *Inst.* 1.53; Chrys. *Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.5 [61:354.17–18]; etc.). Masters are also, however, warned against excessive leniency (Plato *Leg.* 777E–778A; Arist. [*Oec.*] 1.5.2 [1344A]; Tac. *Ann.* 14.44; Colum. *Rust.* 11.25; Sir 42:1–5). Note the positive role of threatening in Pliny *Ep.* 9.21.3 and the positive role of harsh treatment in Philo *Unchangeable* 63–64. Sometimes exhortations to refrain from the brutal treatment of slaves are not motivated by a concern for the welfare of the slave but only by a concern for the self-control of the master. Galen, for example, states that his father often saw friends who had bruised their hands by striking their slaves in anger. His father rebuked these men for their lack of self-control and reminded them that if they had been patient, they could have "used a rod or whip to inflict as many blows as they wished" (*Passions* 4; cf. Sen. Y. *Ira* 3.32.1–2). Translation from Harkins, *Galen*, 39.

Nevertheless, I cannot find any evidence that the early Greek-speaking church read ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν as a command to abandon all punishment, and I find two fifth-century authors who evidently did not hold this interpretation. Shortly after citing ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν, Pseudo-Chrysostom gives the following exhortation to masters concerning their treatment of slaves:

> Do you demand goodwill from the house slave? You yourself also have goodwill for the Master. Do you punish the one sinning? Therefore do not sin, in order that you may not be punished by God. Are you not granting forbearance to a kinsman [i.e. your slave]? Do not yourself ask God for forbearance. (*In cent.* 61:769.47–69)[94]

Thus Pseudo-Chrysostom appears to assume that the Christian master will continue to punish his slaves. Moreover, Theodore of Mopsuestia explicitly argues that Paul was not forbidding all punishment: "It is right that he did not say 'taking away' but *relaxing*. For he does not forbid chastising slaves if they stubbornly persist in sins, nor does he think that discipline should be completely taken away. Rather, he advises them to do this humanely and with pardon" (*Comm. Eph.* 278.28–32).[95] While Chrysostom does not make this same argument, note his parallel use of ἀνίημι and χαλάω (to loosen, relax), two verbs which occur together frequently in the extant literature: "How many, though God bids them assuage their 'threatening' [ἀνιέναι τὴν ἀπειλὴν],

[94] The translation is my own. For further discussion, see Section 3.1.8 above.

[95] Translation from Greer, *Theodore*, 279. Though originally composed in Greek, Theodore's comments on Eph 6:9 are only extant in Latin translation. Other noteworthy citations of ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν in the early Christian literature include Basil *Ask. LR* 11 [31:948.14–22]; Origen *Comm. Matt.* 16.8.170–175; Chrys. *Hom. 1 Cor.* 26.6 [61:220.32–37]; *Hom. Eph.* 22 [62:157.25–26]; *Hom. Col.* 10 [62:368.19–20]; *Hom. 1 Tim.* 16 [62:588.59–61]; *Hom. Phlm.* 1 [62:708.3–16]; *Hom. Heb.* 22 [63:157.37–41]; Theodoret *Interp. epist.* 82:552.16–18. See also Jerome *Comm. Eph.* 6:9.

cannot bear so much as to relax the toil [τὸν πόνον χαλάσαι]!" (*Hom. Matt.* 43 [57.461.47–52]).[96]

While BDAG asserts that ἀνίημι in Eph 6:9 means, "give up, cease from," the evidence offered is not particularly convincing.[97] BDAG cites a certain passage from Thucydides in which the Mytilenaeans explain that they revolted against Athens after they observed the Athenians "relaxing their hostility [τὴν ἔχθραν ἀνιέντας] to the Persians and eager for the enslavement of the allies" (3.10.4 [Smith, LCL]). This statement does not seem to indicate that the Athenians made peace with the Persians but merely that the Athenians devoted less energy to the war. BDAG also cites a certain passage from Plutarch in which we are told that Alexander was angry with a soldier who had committed fraud. Plutarch explains that when Alexander learned that the disgraced man was contemplating suicide, he "put away his wrath [ἀνῆκε τὴν ὀργὴν] and ordered him to keep the money" (*Alex.* 70.6 [Perrin, LCL]). The same language is found in Josephus, who explains that though Herod was angry with a certain Pheroras, "his resentment subsided" (τὴν ὀργὴν ἀνίει; *War* 1.484 [Thackeray, LCL]). In both passages, it is not clear if the king ceased to be angry or merely became less angry.[98]

Nevertheless, one can find better passages to support the gloss offered by BDAG. Josephus writes, "Though the civilians urgently entreated the soldiers to abandon the siege [ἀνεῖναι τὴν πολιορκίαν], they, on the contrary, only pressed it more vigorously" (*War* 2.450

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[96] Translation from *NPNF*[1] 10:269. The gloss for χαλάω is from GE 2329. For the use of ἀνίημι with χαλάω, see Philo *Alleg. Interp.* 2.28; 3.153; *Sacrifices* 37; *Unchangeable* 79; *Drunkenness* 116; *Names* 215; *Spec. Laws* 4.102; *Rewards* 48; 144–45; *Embassy* 267; *QE* 1.19; Plut. *Tu. san.* 20 [*Mor.* 133A.10–11]; *Is. Os.* 40 [*Mor*. 367A.3–5].

[97] BDAG 83. Most commentators and lexicons support this interpretation. So L&N 1:589 [68.43]; O'Brien, *Ephesians,* 454; Thielman, *Ephesians,* 409.

[98] In addition to the passages from Thucydides and Plutarch, BDAG also cites Jos. *Ant.* 14.286. Once again, it is unclear in this passage if ἀνίημι involves cessation or merely relaxation.

[Thackeray, LCL]).[99] Josephus is referring to the siege of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem at the beginning of the revolt. The Jewish civilians, who wisely fear the wrath of Rome, are urging the rebels to call off the siege entirely, not merely slow it down. Thus ἀνίημι in this passage evidently involves a complete cessation and not merely a relaxation.

Consider also those passages in which the object of ἀνίημι is δεσμός. Philo writes, "This is he who not only loosed [οὐ μόνον ἀνείς] but broke the chains [τὰ δεσμά] which had shackled and pressed so hard on the habitable world" (*Embassy* 146).[100] Here a distinction is made between breaking the chains apart and merely loosening them. In other passages, however, this loosening of chains involves a complete release. When Plutarch writes that Serapis came to Dionysius and "loosed his chains" (τοὺς δεσμοὺς ἀνεῖναι; *Alex.* 73.9 [Perrin, LCL]), he obviously means that Dionysius was set free, not merely allowed to move around a bit more. Likewise, when Luke states, "everyone's chains were unfastened [τὰ δεσμὰ ἀνέθη]" (Acts 16:26), he obviously means that everyone was released.[101] Thus we may draw the following conclusion: while ἀνίημι implies a relaxation or loosening, one must determine from the context whether or not this relaxation or loosening entails a complete cessation or release.

Thus, returning to Eph 6:9, the phrase ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν remains rather ambiguous. While it certainly prohibits excessively harsh or cruel treatment, it is also open to a more radical interpretation.[102]

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[99] The phrase ἀνεῖναι τὴν πολιορκίαν also appears in Plut. *Luc.* 27.1. Other passages in which ἀνίημι evidently involves a complete cessation include Diod. Sic. 10.18.4; Jos. *Ant.* 2.235.

[100] Cf. ἀνέντες τὰς ζευκτηρίας in Acts 27:40.

[101] So also Plut. *Brut.* 8.7.

[102] While ἀνίημι is not used with ἀπειλή in the extant non-Christian literature, this verb is used to describe excessive leniency towards slaves. Pseudo-Aristotle gives this advice to slave owners: "In our dealings with slaves, we should not let them be insolent towards us nor allow them free

5.4. Conclusion

John Muddiman provides a concise summary of the argument against the literal interpretation of Eph 6:9: "No action of a slave towards a master has been mentioned in verses 5–8 which could reasonably be reciprocated by the master towards the slave."[103] However, while Muddiman assumes that it is unreasonable for a master to serve his slave, mutual slavery is in fact a prominent and distinctive theme in Christian ethics. Paul commands everyone in the community to serve each other as slaves (Gal 5:13), and he even uses the same verb which appears in Eph 6:7 (δουλεύω). Moreover, the author of Ephesians chooses to introduce the *Haustafel* with an explicit call for mutual submission (Eph 5:21). As consistently recognized in the Greek patristic literature, there is little difference in meaning between δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις in Gal 5:13 and ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις in Eph 5:21. These considerations severely undermine the theory that the peculiar language employed in Eph 6:9 is accidental.

While Frank Thielman argues against downplaying the "radical" nature of the command in Eph 6:9, he balks at the notion that masters should "obey" their slaves (cf. Eph 6:5).[104] To be sure, the image of an obedient master seems very strange, and it is difficult to envision how such an ideal would be realized in practice. Nevertheless, envisioning a master and slave who obey one another is not really much more difficult than envisioning a master and slave who submit to

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reign [μήτε ἀνιᾶν]" ([*Oec.*] 1.5.2 [1344A.30]). Sirach writes, "Set your slave to work, and you will find rest; leave his hands idle [ἄνες χεῖρας αὐτῷ], and he will seek liberty" (33:26; NRSV). Dio Chrysostom speaks of the slave who is "unrestrained [ἀνειμένον] and given to jesting" (*Or.* 66.16 [Crosby, LCL]). Thus it is rather striking that the author of Ephesians uses this verb to describe the proper treatment of slaves. The translation of Pseudo-Aristotle is from Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 186.

[103] Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 281. See also Schreiner, "Another Complementarian Perspective," 300.

[104] Thielman, *Ephesians*, 408–9.

one another. The close connection between ὑποτάσσω and ὑπακούω is evidenced by their use together in 1 Pet 3:5–6. Recall also Basil's question: "The Apostle teaches us to be 'subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.' Therefore do we owe obedience [ὑπακούειν] to everyone and anyone who gives us orders?" (*Ask. SR* 114 [31:1160.3–6]).[105] Basil evidently interprets the command to submit to everyone as a command to obey everyone. Finally, recall the statement made by Chrysostom in his exposition of Eph 5:21: "But he does not choose to submit himself [ὑποταγῆναι] to you? However you submit yourself [ὑποτάγηθι]; not simply yield [ὑπακούσῃς], but submit yourself [ὑποτάγηθι]" (*Hom. Eph.* 19 [62.134.56–58]).'"[106] This statement indicates that Chrysostom actually considers ὑποτάσσω to be stronger than ὑπακούω.

In Chapter 4, I concluded that the command to grant slaves τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα (Col 4:1) is "vague and open-ended" and thus "rather more unsettling" than the concrete instructions found in Philo and Seneca. The same comments apply to Eph 6:9. The slave owners who first heard Colossians read aloud may very well have left the assembly wondering just how far they were being asked to go in establishing equality with their slaves. Likewise, the slave owners who first heard Ephesians may very well have left the assembly wondering just how far they were expected to go in doing "the same things" to their slaves.

[105] Translation from Silvas, *Asketikon*, 335. See discussion of this passage in Section 5.1.1.

[106] Translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 13:142. See discussion of this passage in Section 5.1.1.

CHAPTER 6:
Philemon and the Haustafeln

In Chapters 4 and 5, I challenged the modern consensus that Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 are conventional commands to treat slaves decently. I argued that these commands are instead strangely vague and provocative. Each of the two chapters stands on its own, but when they are considered together, my case becomes even stronger. If only one of the *Haustafeln* were extant, we might perhaps dismiss the peculiar language as mere accident. We might suppose that the author intended to write a conventional command to masters, but inadvertently used language which was open to radical interpretation. However, the fact that both *Haustafeln* employ such language suggests intentionality.

In this chapter I seek to demonstrate that Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 are similar not only to each other, but also to Philemon, the only other text in the Pauline corpus in which a master is given instructions concerning his treatment of a slave.[1] My task in this chapter is thus much easier than

[1] The large majority of scholars agree that Onesimus is Philemon's slave, though debates persist concerning the circumstances which led Onesimus from his master's house to Paul [John Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery*, Recent Research in Biblical Studies 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 58–61, 118–30; D. Francois Tolmie, "Tendencies in the Research on the Letter to Philemon since 1980," in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. D. Francois Tolmie, BZNW 169 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 1–27, esp. 2–6]. Allen Dwight Callahan, however, argues that Onesimus was Philemon's brother and not his slave. According to Callahan, the traditional view of Onesimus as Philemon's slave was invented by John Chrysostom ["Paul's Epistle to Philemon: Toward an Alternative *Argumentum*," *HTR* 86.4 (1993): 357–76; "The Letter to the Philemon," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 329–37; followed by James W. Perkinson, "Enslaved by the Text: The Uses of Philemon," in *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon*, ed. Matthew V. Johnson, James A. Noel, and Demetrius K. Williams, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 121–41, esp. 122–24; Robert Seesengood, *Philemon: Imagination, Labor, and Love*, T&T Clark Study Guides to the New Testament (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 63]. In response to Callahan, Margaret M. Mitchell demonstrates that the view of Onesimus as Philemon's slave is widespread and uncontroversial in patristic literature ["John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Second Look," *HTR* 88.1 (1995): 135–48; see also J. Albert

my task in Chapters 4 and 5. In those chapters, I was attempting to overturn the consensus that Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 are straightforward and conventional. For Philemon, however, there is no such consensus. On the contrary, Paul's language is routinely described as both vague and provocative. In an influential article on Philemon, John M. G. Barclay describes Paul's language as "highly ambiguous," "curiously imprecise," and "extraordinarily unclear."[2] Similar descriptions occur frequently throughout the literature.[3] Furthermore, the apostle has been described as envisioning a "revolution ... to the Roman household,"[4] attempting to precipitate a "social and cultural earthquake,"[5] and undermining "the dominant values upon which the whole structure of Graeco-Roman society was founded."[6]

Harrill, "Review of Allen Dwight Callahan, *Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon*," *CBQ* 60.4 (1998): 757–59]. Callahan's reply to Mitchell fails to adequately address her critiques ["John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Response to Margaret M. Mitchell," *HTR* 88.1 (1995): 149–56].

[2] Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 174–83.

[3] N. T. Wright speaks of Paul's "roundabout style," his "deeply cryptic" request, and his "studied reticence" [*Paul*, 1:12–15]. Timothy A. Brookins states, "Paul succeeds in being splendidly obscure" ["Slaves," 56]. Reidar Aasgaard describes Paul's language as "strikingly vague" [*"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!": Christian Siblingship in Paul*, JSNTSup 265 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 250]. See also Lloyd A. Lewis, "An African American Appraisal of the Philemon-Paul-Onesimus Triangle," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 232–46, esp. 246; Andrew Wilson, "The Pragmatics of Politeness and Pauline Epistolography: A Case Study of the Letter to Philemon," *JSNT* 48 (1992): 107–19, esp. 116; Karl Olav Sandnes, "Equality Within Patriarchal Structures: Some New Testament Perspectives on the Christian Fellowship as a Brother- or Sisterhood and a Family," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 150–65, esp. 156–63; James Tunstead Burtchaell, *Philemon's Problem: A Theology of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 12; Glancy, *Moral Problem*, 31–36; Brookins, "(Dis)Correspondence," 191–93; Joel White, "Philemon, Game Theory and the Reconfiguration of Household Relationships," *EuroJTh* 26.1 (2017): 32–42, esp. 32–33.

[4] McKnight, *Colossians*, 95.

[5] Wright, *Paul*, 1:9.

[6] De Vos, "Once a Slave," 103.

These descriptions of Philemon as vague and provocative spring primarily from Paul's words in Phlm 16: οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν. As James D. G. Dunn observes, "A literal reading would suggest that he [i.e. Paul] wanted Philemon to free Onesimus."[7] Thus many scholars conclude that Paul is requesting the manumission of Onesimus, or at least hinting at manumission.[8] Others argue that Paul does not envision any change in the legal status of Onesimus.[9] Still others find the evidence too ambiguous to render a verdict one way or the other.[10] In this chapter, I examine Phlm 16 and compare Paul's language in this verse to the peculiar language found in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9. I argue that despite significant differences

[7] Dunn, *Colossians*, 334.

[8] So Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 289–90; Klaus Schäfer, *Gemeinde als "Bruderschaft": Ein Beitrag zum Kirchenverständnis des Paulus*, EUS 333 (Bern: Lang, 1989), 267; Keener, *Paul*, 207; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 34C (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 114–15; Moo, *Letters*, 423–25, 436; Borg and Crossan, *First Paul*, 40; G. Francois Wessels, "The Letter to Philemon in the Context of Slavery in Early Christianity," in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. D. Francois Tolmie, BZNW 169 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 143–68, esp. 163–68; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:677–78; Roy R. Jeal, *Exploring Philemon: Freedom, Brotherhood, and Partnership in the New Society*, RRA 2 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 205–6; White, "Philemon," 33; Brookins, "Slaves," 56–57. Scholars also often suggest that Phlm 21 hints at manumission. So Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 266; Dunn, *Colossians*, 306; Moo, *Letters*, 436; Wright, *Paul*, 1:12–15.

[9] So O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 269–70, 296–98; Richard N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 59; Barth and Blanke, *Philemon*, 417–20; de Vos, "Once a Slave," 102–4; Scot McKnight, *The Letter to Philemon*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 97. A number of scholars argue that Paul probably is not requesting the manumission of Onesimus, but nevertheless acknowledge the possibility. So Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 422–24; Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!,"* 250–54, 260; N. H. Taylor, "Onesimus: A Case Study of Slave Conversion in Early Christianity," *R & T* 3.3 (1996): 239–81, esp. 268–72.

[10] So Wilson, "Pragmatics of Politeness," 112; J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (HUT 32; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995), 2–3; Dunn, *Colossians*, 334–36; Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 14, 204–5; Carolyn Osiek, "The Politics of Patronage and the Politics of Kinship: The Meeting of the Ways," *BTB* 39.3 (2009): 143–52, esp. 147–48; Avalos, *Slavery*, 134–35; Glancy, *Moral Problem*, 31–36.

between Philemon and the *Haustafeln*, one can discern in these texts a consistent and distinctive strategy in addressing Christian slave owners.

6.1. The Significance of Brotherhood

Paul's description of Onesimus as Philemon's "beloved brother" (Phlm 16) is striking and certainly unusual.[11] Nevertheless, as scholars often note, such language is not entirely without parallel. Recall the words of Epictetus:

> Will you not bear with your own brother, who has Zeus as his progenitor and is, as it were, a son born of the same seed as yourself and of the same sowing from above. ... Do you not remember what you are, and over whom you rule – that they are kinsmen, that they are brothers by nature, that they are the offspring of Zeus? (*Diatr*. 1.13.3–4 [Oldfather, LCL])[12]

After citing this passage, Barclay asserts that while they recognized universal brotherhood, the Stoics did not find it "in the least anomalous to consider someone both a brother and a slave."[13] This is perhaps overstated. Epictetus continues on in the same passage to contrast "these wretched laws of ours" that permit one man to own another with "the laws of the gods" (1.13.5). Thus Epictetus evidently considers slavery to be an unnatural violation of divinely established brotherhood.[14] Nevertheless, Barclay's basic point remains: identifying master and slave as brothers did not lead Epictetus to call for the abolition of slavery.

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[11] The master/slave relationship is more frequently described with father/child imagery (so Sen. Y. *Ep.* 47.14; Pliny *Ep.* 5.19.1–2). See Eva Marie Lassen, "The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 103–20, esp. 109.

[12] See the discussion of this passage in Section 4.3.1 above.

[13] Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 181.

[14] As discussed in Section 4.3.1 above, such a perspective on slavery was not uncommon in antiquity. See esp. Philo *Good Person* 79.

A second parallel is suggested by Mitzi Smith in her recent study on Philemon. Smith notes that in Heliodorus' novel, *An Ethiopian Story*, the noblewoman Arsake refers to Kybele, her elderly slave, as "Mother" (7.10.1, 3, 5). Despite such affectionate language, however, Smith claims that Arsake ultimately has Kybele poisoned. From this episode, Smith appears to conclude that the use of familial language by a master did not necessarily coincide with any significant improvement in the slave's lot.[15] However, Smith has misread Heliodorus. Arsake does not have Kybele poisoned; Kybele's death is due to an unintended blunder (8.7–9; esp. 8.9.2–3).[16] Furthermore, one must remember that Arsake is a ruthless villain.[17] Thus, even if Arsake had poisoned her "mother," the story would hardly demonstrate that such behavior was

[15] Mitzi J. Smith, "Utility, Fraternity, and Reconciliation: Ancient Slavery as a Context for the Return of Onesimus," in *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon*, ed. Matthew V. Johnson, James A. Noel, and Demetrius K. Williams, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 47–58, esp. 54. So also Mitzi J. Smith, "Philemon," in *Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 605–7, esp. 607. The Translation of Heliodorus is from J. R. Morgan, "Heliodorus: An Ethiopian Story," in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. B. P. Reardon (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 407–686, esp. 579.

[16] Smith also claims, "Arsake accuses Kybele of acting as if she is Theagenes's slave instead of her own slave" ["Utility," 54]. This is another inexplicable misreading of the novel. In the passage cited by Smith (8.5), it is Kybele who accuses Arsake of acting like Theagenes' slave.

[17] The narrator introduces Arsake as "a slave to perverted and dissipated pleasure" (7.2.1). Though she is married, Arsake continually seeks out other men (7.2, 9–10, 16). When she encounters Theagenes, the handsome young protagonist, she desires him at once (7.4, 6, 8–10). When Theagenes refuses her illicit advances, Arsake has him taken to the dungeons and tortured (8.5–6). When the noble Greek still refuses to submit, Arsake attempts to poison Charikleia, his beloved (8.6–7). Arsake is not only lecherous and treacherous; she is also grossly impious. She attempts to seduce her city's high priest in the temple (7.2). Later, when the priest confronts her for her treatment of Theagenes and Charikleia, Arsake drives him away, declaring, "I do not give a damn for your holy orders!" (8.5.4). The translations of Heliodorus are from Morgan, "Heliodorus," 570, 607.

normative.[18] Arsake's murder of her "mother" would be no more indicative of conventional expectations in the master/slave relationship than Arsake's many flagrant infidelities are indicative of conventional expectations in the marriage relationship.[19] Finally, Smith fails to mention that Kybele herself boasts that because of her intimate relationship with her mistress, her current life in slavery is preferable to her former life in freedom (7.12.6).[20] In short, the novel does not justify Smith's sweeping conclusion that "fictive kinship language and ties" did not even "ameliorate" the oppression of slavery.[21] Nevertheless, the novel does indicate that masters sometimes used warm familial language to refer to their slaves.[22]

Perhaps the most significant parallel to Phlm 16 is Sir 33:31–33, a passage which is frequently cited in the literature on Philemon.

> If you have but one slave, treat him like yourself [ἔστω ὡς συ], because you have bought him with blood. If you have but one slave, treat him like a brother [ἄγε αὐτὸν ὡς

[18] While Arsake does not have Kybele poisoned, she is certainly capable of such a deed. When the wicked scheme concocted by Arsake and Kybele begins to unravel, Kybele confesses to her son that she fears Arsake will commit suicide and have her killed as well (7.23.1–3).

[19] On Arsake's marital infidelities, see Note 17 above.

[20] On slaves who chose to remain in slavery despite having the opportunity of freedom, see Suet. *Gramm.* 21; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 15.13–14; Pallad. *Laus. Hist.* 61.5. On slaves with considerable influence and wealth, see Philo *Good Person* 35; Plut. *Ag. Cleom.* 7.2; Pliny E. *N.H.* 33.52 [145–146]. The passage from Palladius was brought to my attention by M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980), 123. For a translation of Palladius, see John Wortley, *Palladius of Aspuna: The Lausiac History* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2015).

[21] Smith, "Utility," 54.

[22] Masters and slaves sometimes had affectionate relationships. Tacitus records the story of a slave who gave his life for his master (*Hist.* 4.50). Pliny is grieved when several of his household slaves become seriously ill (*Ep.* 8.16; 8.19.1). Cicero clearly has an affectionate relationship with Tiro, an intelligent slave whom he eventually manumits (*Fam.* 40–42 [16.13–15]; 120–24 [16.1–5]; 143.1 [16.11]; 146.6 [16.12]; 184–86 [16.19, 22, 17]; 219–20 [16.18, 20]). Cicero expresses particular concern over Tiro's poor health. Cicero's brother Quintus is also affectionate with Tiro (*Fam.* 44.1 [16.16]; 147 [16.8]; 352.2 [16.27]).

> ἀδελφόν], for you will need him as you need your life. If you ill-treat him, and he leaves you and runs away, which way will you go to seek him? (NRSV)[23]

Sirach's use of fraternal language does not indicate that the slave is to be manumitted. On the contrary, the master is encouraged to lead his slave as a "brother" for the very purpose of not ultimately being deprived of the slave's services. Furthermore, when it comes to the management of slaves, Sirach actually falls on the more brutal end of the spectrum of views attested in our sources. In the verses immediately preceding those cited above, Sirach observes that there are "racks and tortures" for a "wicked" slave (33:27). Concerning the slave who "does not obey," Sirach encourages the master to "make his fetters heavy" (33:30). Some chapters later, Sirach exhorts masters as follows: "Do not be ashamed ... of drawing blood from the back of a wicked slave" (42:1–5).[24] In summary, Sirach's use of fraternal language neither implies manumission nor indicates a particularly humane approach to slavery.

These three parallels demonstrate that the mere identification of a slave as a "brother" does not necessarily suggest a radical reorientation of the relationship between master and slave.

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[23] For discussions of Sir 33:31–33 and Phlm 16, see Schäfer, *Gemeinde als "Bruderschaft,"* 276; Strecker, "Haustafeln," 372; Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 181; de Vos, "Once a Slave," 102; Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!,"* 255; Avalos, *Slavery*, 130. In addition to Sir 33:31–33, it is also worth noting the evidence collected by Philip A. Harland concerning the use of "brother" language in associations ["Familial Dimensions of Group Identity: 'Brothers' (ΑΔΕΛΦΟΙ) in Associations of the Greek East," *JBL* 124.3 (2005): 491–513; *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 63–81]. The significance of such language for Phlm 16 is heightened when one considers that some associations evidently included both slaves and free persons [Harland, *Dynamics of Identity*, 33; John S. Kloppenborg and Richard S. Ascough, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary. I. Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace*, vol. 181 of *BZNW* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), vii; John S. Kloppenborg, "Associations, Christ Groups, and Their Place in the *Polis*," *ZNW* 108.1 (2017): 1–56, esp. 8, 17–18]. On the metaphorical use of sibling language among various non-Christian groups in antiquity, see also Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!,"* 107–16.

[24] Of course Sirach does not encourage such brutality towards all slaves. Elsewhere he states, "Do not abuse slaves who work faithfully. ... Let your soul love intelligent slaves; do not withhold from them their freedom" (7:20–21).

However, in assessing the language of Phlm 16, one must also consider the specific meaning and significance of brotherhood in Paul's thought.[25] Reidar Aasgaard counts 120 metaphorical uses of the ἀδελφ- root in Paul's seven undisputed letters and observes that this frequency is unparalleled in the contemporaneous literature.[26] Moreover, Aasgaard demonstrates that Paul's "sibling ethic" is "based on what it meant in antiquity to be a sibling, with the ideals,

[25] For studies which examine Paul's use of sibling language, see David M. Bossman, "Paul's Fictive Kinship Movement," *BTB* 26.4 (1996): 163–71, esp. 167–70; Reidar Aasgaard, "Brotherhood in Plutarch and Paul: Its Role and Character," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 166–82; Philip F. Esler, "Family Imagery and Christian Identity in Gal 5:13 to 6:10," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 121–49; S. Scott Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy: The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings," *BTB* 29.2 (1999): 68–78; Philip Esler, "'Keeping It in the Family': Culture, Kinship and Identity in 1 Thessalonians and Galatians," in *Families and Family Relations as Represented in Early Judaisms and Early Christianities: Texts and Fictions*, ed. Jan Willem van Henten and Athalya Brenner, STAR 2 (Leiden: Deo, 2000), 145–84; Jan Willem van Henten, "The Family Is Not All That Matters: A Response to Esler," in *Families and Family Relations as Represented in Early Judaisms and Early Christianities: Texts and Fictions*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Jan Willem van Henten, STAR 2 (Leiden: Deo, 2000), 185–91; Horrell, "From Ἀδελφοί to Οἶκος Θεοῦ"; Reidar Aasgaard, "'Role Ethics' in Paul: The Significance of the Sibling Role for Paul's Ethical Thinking," *NTS* 48.4 (2002): 513–30; Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!"*; Joseph Hellerman, "Brothers and Friends in Philippi: Family Honor in the Roman World and in Paul's Letter to the Philippians," *BTB* 39.1 (2009): 15–25; J. Punt, "Pauline Brotherhood, Gender and Slaves: Fragile Fraternity in Galatians," *Neot* 47.1 (2013): 149–69. See also Lassen, "Roman Family," 114–15.

[26] Aasgaard, "'Role Ethics' in Paul," 516–17. Lucian, a hostile outsider, bears witness to the importance of brotherhood to the Christians: "Their first lawgiver [i.e. Jesus] persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another. ... Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property. ... So if any charlatan and trickster, able to profit by occasions, comes among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk" (*Peregr.* 13.13–24 [Harmon, LCL]). Tertullian likewise connects the brotherhood of the Christians with their communal sharing of possessions. He also states that the critics of the Christians object to their use of brotherhood language (*Apol.* 39.5–11). This suggests that the Christian use of the sibling metaphor was unusual. On the communal sharing of possessions in the Christian community, see also Acts 2:44–45; 4:34–37; 1 Cor 8:13–15; Did. 4.8; Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 14.2; 67.6–7; Aristides *Apol.* 15. The notion that brothers should hold their possessions in common is found in Plut. *Frat. amor.* 12 [*Mor.* 484.B].

expectations, duties and rights associated with that role."[27] For example, in his treatise on brotherly love, Plutarch writes of brothers taking each other to court over disputes concerning their inheritance. Plutarch describes this common occurrence as paradigmatic of a failure to demonstrate proper brotherly affection (*Frat. amor.* 11 [*Mor*. 483D]).[28] As Aasgaard observes, when Paul argues in 1 Cor 6:5–8 that Christians should not take each other to court, he draws heavily on the brotherhood metaphor.[29]

Nevertheless, despite acknowledging that Paul's sibling ethic is shaped by cultural expectations and ideals concerning proper sibling relationships, Aasgaard does not ultimately find this sibling ethic incompatible with slavery. He argues, "Equality was not a very prominent notion as concerns sibling relations; rather, the focus was on unity in spite of differences and inequalities." Aasgaard specifically emphasizes that in his treatise on brotherly love, Plutarch assumes that brothers will be different in rank and ability. Instead of insisting on social equality, Plutarch simply proposes steps to mitigate these unavoidable inequalities.[30]

Aasgaard, however, has understated the tension between Paul's sibling ethic and slavery. First, Aasgaard underestimates the significance of equality for the sibling relationship. In a discussion of domestic relations, Aristotle describes the friendship between (1) husband and wife, (2) father and son, and (3) brothers. The distinguishing feature of the third relationship is that it is "on a footing of equality" (κατ᾽ ἰσότητα; *Eth. eud.* 7.10.8–9 [1242A.31–36; Rackham,

[27] Aasgaard, "'Role Ethics' in Paul," 530.

[28] So also Tert. *Apol.* 39.10.

[29] Aasgaard, "'Role Ethics' in Paul," 527.

[30] Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!,"* 256. So also Aasgaard, "'Role Ethics' in Paul," 522; Osiek, "The Politics of Patronage," 147; Punt, "Pauline Brotherhood," 150.

LCL]).[31] Dionysius of Halicarnassus likewise describes the household ethics of the Romans as follows:

> They believed that neither a master should be cruel in the punishments meted out to his slaves, nor a father unduly harsh or lenient in the training of his children, nor a husband unjust in his partnership with his lawfully-wedded wife, nor children disobedient toward their aged parents, nor should own brothers strive for more than their equal share. (*Ant. rom.* 20.13.3 [Cary, LCL])

In this passage, which encapsulates conventional expectations for household relationships, the notion of equality is as central to the brother relationship as the notion of obedience is to the parent/child relationship. Elsewhere in the same work, Dionysius speaks of rival groups who abandoned "brotherly sentiments towards each other" and instead "scorned equality and craved superiority" (1.85.5).

When we turn to Christian sources, we see again a clear connection between brotherhood and equality. In his commentary on Phlm 16, John Chrysostom writes, "By calling him [i.e. Onesimus] his son, he [i.e. Paul] has shown his natural affection; and by calling him his brother, his great good will for him, and his equality in honor [τὴν ἰσοτιμίαν]" (*Hom. Phlm.* 2.2 [62:711.32–35]).[32] Consider also the words of Lactantius, a Christian apologist writing in the early fourth century:

> Someone will say: 'Are there not among you some poor, some rich, some slaves, some masters? Is there not something of concern to individuals?' Nothing. *Nor is there any other reason why we take for ourselves the name of brother one to another, unless it is that we believe that we are equal.* For since we measure all human things, not by the body, but by the spirit, and although the condition of the bodies may be diversified, there are not slaves among us, but we regard them and we speak of them as brothers in spirit and as fellow-slaves in religion. (*Div. Inst.* 5.15 [5.16])[33]

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[31] See the discussion of this passage in Section 4.1 above.

[32] Translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 13:552.

[33] Translation from McDonald, *Lactantius*, 365. Emphasis mine. On the date of *The Divine Institutes*, see *ODCC* 947. On the Christian practice of calling slaves brothers, see also Aristides *Apol*. 15.

In stark contrast to Aasgaard's claim that equality "was not a very prominent notion as concerns sibling relations," Lactantius asserts that a belief in equality is the *only* reason Christians use the sibling metaphor. Furthermore, while Lactantius ultimately reconciles Christian brotherhood with slavery, he does so only by drawing a sharp distinction between the physical and spiritual and confining brotherhood to the spiritual.[34]

This leads to a second critique of Aasgaard's analysis. In addition to downplaying the importance of equality in the sibling relationship, Aasgaard has not given sufficient attention to the obvious incompatibility of the sibling relationship with the slave/master relationship. While it is of course true that many inequalities existed between siblings, "no virtuous person willingly enslaved members of their own family."[35] Plutarch naturally recognizes that brothers are often unequal in age, ability, or status, but he would certainly have objected to the practice of holding one's own brother as a slave! The general attitude toward such behavior can be deduced from the rebuke which Reuben gives his brothers in Philo's *Life of Joseph* (cf. Gen 37:29–30). In this speech, Reuben asserts that the act of selling a brother into slavery is so extraordinarily wicked that it will earn them all infamy throughout the world for their remarkable "faithlessness and inhumanity" (18–19 [Colson, LCL]).[36]

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[34] As discussed in Section 6.2 below, the phrase καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ in Phlm 16 does not support such a dichotomy.

[35] White, "Philemon," 38.

[36] Recall Philo's praise of the virtuous Essenes: "They denounce the owners of slaves ... for their impiety in annulling the statute of Nature, who mother-like has born and reared all men alike, and created them genuine brothers, not in mere name, but in very reality" (*Good Person* 79 [Colson, LCL]; see Section 4.3.1 above). Such a statement presumes that Philo's audience recognizes the fundamental incompatibility of slavery and brotherhood. Note also that the Hebrew Bible forbade keeping an Israelite "brother" as a slave (Lev 25:39–42; cf. Deut 15:12–18; Jer 34:8–17). It is doubtful, however, that these biblical regulations concerning Jewish servants were widely followed by Jews in Greco-Roman times, even in Palestine [Dale B. Martin, "Slavery and

As Aasgaard recognizes, Plutarch urges the superior brother to do what he can to mitigate any inequality (ἀνισότης) which exists in his relationship with his brother, even if this involves considerable personal sacrifice. Plutarch thus advises a man "to make his brothers partners in those respects in which he is considered to be superior, adorning them with a portion of his repute and adopting them into his friendships." He continues on to recommend the behavior of Lucullus, who "refused to hold office before his brother, older though he was, but forwent his own proper time for candidature and awaited his brother's" (*Frat. amor.* 12 [*Mor.* 484.C–E; Helmbold, LCL]).[37] Unsurprisingly, Plutarch does not address the extraordinary situation in which a man holds his own brother as a slave, but the obvious application of Plutarch's advice to such a scenario would be for the superior brother (i.e. the master) to set his sibling free.

Finally, the exhortation in 1 Tim 6:2 reveals that at least some early Christians did feel a tension between Christian brotherhood and slavery: "Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brethren; rather they must serve all the better [μᾶλλον δουλευέτωσαν] since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved" (RSV).[38]

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the Ancient Jewish Family," in *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 113–29, esp. 115–16; Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 307–8, 321, 387].

[37] Diodorus Siculus likewise praises Scipio's magnanimous choice to divide his inheritance with his brother in order to equalize their fortunes (31.27.5–6). See also the account of the mythical brothers Castor and Pollux in Philo *Embassy* 84–85.

[38] In my discussion of 1 Tim 6:2, I follow the majority of commentators and translators in interpreting ὅτι ἀδελφοί εἰσιν as the reason for the disrespect. However, a minority interpret this phrase as the reason for the command. Scholars who hold the majority view include George W. Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 246; I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 630–31; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 284; Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 384. Scholars who hold the minority view include Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to*

Evidently some slaves were prompted by the notion of Christian brotherhood to act towards their masters in ways which were considered inappropriate by the author of 1 Timothy.[39] A similar exhortation appears in Ignatius' letter to Polycarp:

> Do not be arrogant towards male and female slaves, but neither let them become haughty; rather, let them serve even more as slaves [πλέον δουλευέτωσαν] for the glory of God, that they may receive a greater freedom from God. And they should not long to be set free through the common fund, lest they be found slaves of passion. (4:3 [Ehrman, LCL])[40]

Like the accusation of disrespect in 1 Tim 6:2, the accusation of conceit in this passage suggests that some Christian slaves were no longer content to be treated as social inferiors.[41]

Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 483–84.

[39] See the discussions of 1 Tim 6:2 in Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 178; Horrell, "From Ἀδελφοί to Οἶκος Θεοῦ," 307.

[40] Several passages in the early Christian literature possibly allude to the practice of purchasing the freedom of slaves. In addition to "ministering to widows" and "visiting orphans and those in need," Shepherd of Hermas speaks of "redeeming the slaves of God from their calamities" (Mand. 8.10 [Ehrman, LCL]). Elsewhere Shepherd of Hermas states that "instead of fields," one should "purchase souls that have been afflicted, insofar as you can, and take care of widows and orphans" (Sim. 1:8). The Apostolic Constitutions state that money from the communal fund should be used for "the redemption of the saints, the deliverance of slaves, and of captives, and of prisoners, and of those that have been abused, and of those that have been condemned by tyrants to single combat and death on account of the name of Christ" (4.9; *ANF* 7:435). See also Tert. *Apol.* 39.6; Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 67.6–7; *Const. apost.* 5.1–2; Aristides *Apol*. 15. For a discussion of these passages, see Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves*, 178–82.

[41] A later expression of the tension between Christian brotherhood and slavery is found in John Chrysostom's commentary on Eph 6:5: "What do you mean, blessed Paul? He [i.e. the slave] is a brother, ... he enjoys the same privileges, he belongs to the same body. Yeah, more, he is the brother, not of his own master only, but also of the Son of God, he is partaker of all the same privileges; yet you say, 'obey your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling'?" Chrysostom solves this dilemma by appealing to the previous command in 5:21. Chrysostom argues that since Paul has just commanded free people to submit to one another, there is no reason why he should not also command slaves to obey their masters (*Hom. Eph.* 22 [62:155.42–57]; translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 13:157–58). For Chrysostom's view of mutual service between master and slave, see Sections 3.2.5 and 5.1.1 above.

In conclusion, Paul's description of Philemon and Onesimus as beloved brothers calls into question the viability of their relationship as master and slave.[42] Nevertheless, what is most remarkable about Phlm 16 is not that Paul describes master and slave as brothers. The brotherhood of master and slave is implied throughout Paul's letters.[43] What is most remarkable about Phlm 16 is that, as discussed below, Paul draws out the more radical implications of this imagery by explicitly contrasting the status of "brother" with the status of "slave."

6.2. The Question of Manumission

Ben Witherington, who interprets Phlm 16 as a clear call for manumission, argues that the phrase οὐκέτι ὡς means "no longer as" instead of "not merely as." Furthermore, Witherington argues that the contrast formed by οὐκέτι and ἀλλά indicates that "the former condition is to stop."[44] In support of this reading, consider the following passage from Favorinus. While addressing an unnamed people group who were purportedly descended from the Athenians, Favorinus states that the Athenians had begun to treat these people "no longer as sons, but rather as slaves" (οὐκέτι ὡς παισὶν ὑμῖν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς δούλοις χρωμένους; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 64.13 [Crosby, LCL]).[45] In addition to using the same construction found in Phlm 16 (οὐκέτι ὡς ... ἀλλά), Favorinus also make a similar contrast. While Paul contrasts slave and brother,

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[42] Mitzi Smith concludes that the fraternal language used in Phlm 16 merely "reflects actual expectations in the widespread ancient practice of slavery, both in ancient Israel and in Greco-Roman culture alike." However, this conclusion is unwarranted. In addition to the passage from Heliodorus, discussed above, Smith cites only a string of passages from the Torah and NT. None of these passages comes close to demonstrating that masters in the Greco-Roman world were generally expected to view their slaves as beloved brothers [Smith, "Utility," 51–55, 57–58].

[43] Paul routinely refers to the entire Christian community as "brothers" (Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 1:10; Gal 3:15; etc.).

[44] Witherington, *Letters to Philemon,* 79.

[45] On the attribution of this oration to Favorinus, see M. B. Trapp, "Favorinus," *OCD* 571.

Favorinus contrasts son and slave. Here the οὐκέτι ὡς ... ἀλλά construction clearly indicates that the former condition has ceased and has been replaced by a new condition. These people are treated by the Athenians as slaves *instead of* sons.[46]

Some scholars argue that the phrase ὑπὲρ δοῦλον (NRSV: "more than a slave") suggests that Paul envisions Onesimus remaining a slave.[47] Consider the following English sentence: *Hoke is more than Daisy's chauffeur; he is her friend*. In this sentence, it is clear that Hoke's status as "friend" does not negate his status as "chauffeur." The phrase "more than" indicates that Hoke remains Daisy's chauffeur, even if he is not *merely* her chauffeur. However, it is not at all obvious that the preposition ὑπέρ has the same meaning in Phlm 16 that the English phrase "more than" has in the sentence above. In Matt 10:24–25 and Luke 6:40, Jesus says that a disciple can be ὡς ὁ διδάσκαλος but not ὑπὲρ τὸν διδάσκαλον. In the Matthean version, Jesus also says that a slave can be ὡς ὁ κύριος but not ὑπὲρ τὸν κύριον. Here ὑπέρ clearly indicates superiority and could be translated "greater than" or "better than." This meaning fits the context of Phlm 16 quite well, for a brother is superior to a slave. On such an interpretation of ὑπέρ, the phrase ὑπὲρ δοῦλον is perfectly compatible with the notion that Paul is envisioning manumission.[48]

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[46] For additional examples of the οὐκέτι ὡς ... ἀλλά construction, see Diod. Sic. 33.14.1.3–6; Iren. Frag. 23.3–4; 44.3–4; Xen. *Eph*. 4.1.1.5–6. In all of these examples, the former condition has ceased and been replaced by a new condition. Note that if Paul had meant, "no longer as *merely* a slave," he could have said so quite easily. Such a construction is found, for example, in Philo. Philo states that God spoke with Abraham "no longer *only* as God to man, but *also* as friend to a familiar" (οὐκέτι μόνον ὡς ἀνθρώπῳ θεός, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς φίλος γνωρίμῳ; *Abraham* 273; my translation). Here the language clearly indicates that the "God to man" relationship still persists, even though a new relationship, "friend to familiar," has emerged.

[47] So Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, 422–23. See also Moo, *Letters*, 422.

[48] N. H. Taylor argues that if Paul intended to suggest manumission, he could have omitted ὑπὲρ δοῦλον or used the genitive (ὑπὲρ δοῦλου), so that the phrase would mean, "instead of a slave" ["Onesimus," 270]. However, Paul is evidently attempting to persuade Philemon that he is

Nevertheless, even if Phlm 16 means that Onesimus is a brother *instead of* a slave, these words might still merely describe Onesimus' status in Philemon's eyes and not his legal status. Recall that Seneca opens his famous epistle on the treatment of slaves by insisting that slaves should be considered friends instead of slaves: "'They are slaves' people declare. Nay, rather they are men. 'Slaves!' No, comrades. 'Slaves!' No, they are unpretentious friends" (*Ep.* 47.1 [Gummere, LCL]). Despite such statements, Seneca concludes his epistle by explicitly denying that he is calling for manumission (47.18). Paul, however, continues on to add the remarkable phrase, καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ. As David G. Horrell observes, Paul's language in Phlm 16 "seems intended to oppose explicitly any notion that this 'brotherhood' applied only to some nonworldly realm in the sight of God." Thus Paul's language implies "a real change in the social relationship between slave and owner."[49] Furthermore, the logic of Phlm 16 strongly suggests that this "real change" includes manumission. If Onesimus is a brother "in the flesh," and if Onesimus' status as a brother displaces his status as a slave, then it follows that Onesimus is no longer a slave "in the flesh."[50]

Scot McKnight objects to this conclusion, emphasizing the lack of any explicit reference to manumission:

> We do not find language about handing over or of turning around [cf. Epict. *Diatr.* 2.1.26]. We do not find him [i.e. Paul] even hinting at public spaces or a courtroom or a

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benefitting from this new relationship with Onesimus. Paul states that Onesimus was once "useless" to Philemon but is now "useful" (11). The phrase, οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, appears to develop this line of thought. Philemon is not getting a slave back; he is getting something much better than a slave, namely, a "beloved brother."

[49] Horrell, "From Ἀδελφοί to Οἶκος Θεοῦ," 302. See also Schäfer, *Gemeinde als "Bruderschaft,"* 256–57; Sandnes, "Equality," 157; Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 181; Brookins, "Slaves," 56–57.

[50] Scholars often argue that the phrase, "in the flesh," indicates that Paul is envisioning manumission [so Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 80; Moo, *Letters*, 424–25]. Harrill notes the possibility, but remains indecisive [*Manumission of Slaves*, 3].

> praetor. We also hear nothing of taxation or payment to a court official. We see no description of the legal condition after the act of manumission. .... Most notable of all, the word "freedom" is loudly absent in Philemon.[51]

This is a valid point which should caution us from describing Phlm 16 as a direct and unambiguous call for manumission. However, the fact that Paul does not explicitly mention manumission hardly proves that Paul does not hint at manumission. Consider the reference to manumission found in a Latin letter from Quintus to his brother Cicero.[52] In this letter, Quintus expresses his joy that Cicero has decided to manumit a slave named Tiro. Quintus writes,

> I am truly delighted with what you have done about Tiro, in judging his former condition to be below his deserts and preferring us to have him *as a friend rather than a slave*. Believe me, I jumped for joy when I read your letter and his. Thank you, and congratulations! (Cic. *Fam.* 44.1 [16.16; Bailey, LCL])[53]

Of course this letter presupposes a prior correspondence in which, presumably, Cicero described his manumission of Tiro in more explicit terms. However, the point remains that Tiro refers to the act of manumission without using any of the terms or phrases listed by McKnight. Instead, he uses language which is remarkably similar to the language used by Paul in Phlm 16. Just as Paul contrasts Onesimus' former condition as a slave with his current condition as a "beloved brother," Quintus contrasts Tiro's former condition as a slave with his current condition as a "friend."

Another objection is voiced by N. H. Taylor. He argues that manumission "was not read into the text until the institution of slavery itself had been brought into question in western

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[51] McKnight, *Philemon*, 25.

[52] This passage is discussed in Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1. The relevance of this passage to Philemon is noted in Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 204–5.

[53] Emphasis mine.

Europe and North America."[54] It is true that the earliest commentators on Phlm 16 do not even discuss the possibility that the verse calls for the manumission of Onesimus.[55] However, while these early interpretations of Phlm 16 should again caution us from describing the verse as an unambiguous call for manumission, we cannot confine our interpretation of this verse to the patristic understanding. Pre-modern scholars such as John Chrysostom believed that the author of Philemon also wrote 1 Tim 6:2, a passage which affirms that Christian masters are permitted to hold their "brothers" as slaves. Thus it is hardly surprising that Chrysostom and others do not interpret Phlm 16 as an implicit exhortation to manumit Onesimus.[56] Modern critical scholars, however, cannot assume that the perspective on slavery expressed in 1 Timothy is precisely the same as the perspective expressed in Philemon.

To be sure, a minority of scholars do defend the Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy.[57] If Paul did indeed compose 1 Tim 6:2, then it becomes more difficult to read Phlm 16 as a call for the manumission of Onesimus. The problem is not that there is any explicit contradiction between Phlm 16 and 1 Tim 6:2. The problem is that while the use of ἀδελφός and ἀγαπητός in 1 Tim 6:2 echoes the description of Onesimus as ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν in Phlm 16, there is nothing in 1 Tim 6:2 which suggests that this brotherhood renders the slave/master relationship obsolete. On the contrary, the verse clearly portrays beloved brothers continuing to live together as master

[54] Taylor, "Onesimus," 269.

[55] See Basil *Ask. LR* 11 [31:948.7–22]; Chrys. *Hom. Phlm.* 2.2 [62:711.6–35]; Theodoret *Interp. epist.* 82:876.37–44; Theod. Mops. *Comm. Phlm.* 798.27–802.5.

[56] Note that Chrysostom cites 1 Tim 6:1–2 to refute the notion that in 1 Cor 7:23 Paul is urging slaves to "forsake their masters and strive contentiously to become free" (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 19.5 [61:157.19–28; *NPNF*[1] 12:109]).

[57] So Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 51–52; Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 55–99. For a summary of objections to Pauline authorship, see Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 59–79.

and slave. However, one must not overlook the fact that 1 Tim 6:2 is a general exhortation for the entire community. Paul may have been willing to urge Philemon to manumit Onesimus and yet have remained hesitant to suggest that all Christian masters should release their Christian slaves (see discussion in Chapter 7 below). Furthermore, even those scholars who defend the Pauline character of 1 Timothy often concede that others played a significant role in the actual composition of the document. Some argue that the epistle was written at Paul's request by one of his associates, perhaps Luke, who was given a significant degree of freedom in the wording of the text.[58] Others argue that the letter was produced after Paul's death by his associates, perhaps including Timothy, who drew upon genuine Pauline traditions.[59] If some such reconstruction is correct, we should not be surprised if the more subtle nuances of Paul's particular approach to slavery were lost in transmission. Given these considerations, even if 1 Timothy is authentically Pauline, one cannot rule out the possibility that Phlm 16 hints at a more radical vision of Christian brotherhood than the one presented in 1 Tim 6:2.

In conclusion, Paul's language in Phlm 16 does seem to suggest manumission. The impression that Paul is hinting at manumission becomes even stronger when we consider his subsequent words. Paul explicitly commands Philemon to welcome Onesimus "as you would welcome me" (17), and perhaps even more significantly, Paul concludes his letter by expressing his confidence that Philemon "will do even more than I say" (21). Nevertheless, it is difficult to

[58] So William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46 of *WBC* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), cii–ciii; cxxvii–cxxix; Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1–2 Timothy, and 1–3 John* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 174–76.

[59] So Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 83–92.

deny that Paul's language remains vague. As Barclay observes, "At the very least one would have to acknowledge that Paul could have made his request a lot clearer than he has!"[60]

6.3. Excursus: 1 Corinthians 7:21

While many scholars find an allusion to manumission in Phlm 16, there is one passage in Paul's letters in which the manumission of Christian slaves is explicitly addressed: 1 Cor 7:21. Thus one cannot consider the question of manumission in Philemon without also giving some attention to this passage. Unfortunately, 1 Cor 7:21 is open to two precisely opposite interpretations. Paul writes: δοῦλος ἐκλήθης, μή σοι μελέτω· ἀλλ᾽ εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι. The debate concerns the implied object of the final imperative, χρῆσαι. Does Paul mean that the slave who has the opportunity to be free should "use freedom" or "use slavery"? The former interpretation is expressed by the RSV: "But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity."[61] The latter interpretation is expressed by the NJB: "Even if you have a chance of freedom, you should prefer to make full use of your condition as a slave."[62] On this latter reading, Paul is actually encouraging the slave to reject manumission and remain in slavery.

Origen, the earliest extant commentator on the verse, evidently understands the command to mean, "use freedom," though he applies the discussion of slavery metaphorically to marriage (*Comm. 1 Cor.* 38.2–7). Other patristic commentators, however, support the "use slavery"

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[60] Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 174. Despite denying that Paul's request is "ambiguous," even G. Francois Wessels acknowledges that Paul did not "explicitly ask" for manumission but instead framed his appeal in such a way that the manumission of Onesimus could be seen as "Philemon's own idea" ["Philemon," 163–65]. For more on Wessels' interpretation, see the discussion in Section 7.7 below.

[61] So also ESV; NASB; NET; NIV.

[62] So also NRSV.

interpretation. John Chrysostom is the first to explicitly discuss the ambiguity. While he adopts the "use slavery" interpretation, he acknowledges that some of his contemporaries understand the verse to mean, "use freedom" (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 19.4 [61:156.17–36]).[63] The debate has continued throughout the modern era, but in recent decades, scholars appear to be reaching a consensus in favor of the "use freedom" interpretation.[64]

Two studies have been particularly influential. First, S. Scott Bartchy argued in 1973 that slaves did not have the choice to refuse manumission.[65] This is challenged by J. Albert Harrill, who cites the practice of enticing slaves to join a revolt by promising them freedom if they desert their current masters. Harrill correctly observes that many slaves refused such offers and were commended for doing so.[66] However, as the classicist Keith Bradly observes, these examples from the Roman civil wars are hardly relevant to the situation in Corinth in Paul's day.[67] Bartchy's claim is that slaves could not refuse an offer of manumission *from their own masters*, and Harrill has provided no evidence contradicting this assertion.

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[63] At three other places in his extant writings, Chrysostom cites the command μᾶλλον χρῆσαι (twice in *Hom. Phlm.* Arg. [62:704.8–12]; once in *Serm. Gen.* 5.1 [54:600.36–53]). Each time, he immediately follows the citation with an explanation that these words mean to remain in slavery. For a translation of *Serm. Gen.*, see Robert C. Hill, *St. John Chrysostom: Eight Sermons from the Book of Genesis* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox, 2004), 84–85. Other early commentators who adopt the "use slavery" interpretation include Severian *Fr. 1 Cor.* 251.2.2–15; Theodoret *Interp. epist.* 82:280.7–15; Cyril Alex. *Fr. 1 Cor.* 273.4–274.11.

[64] For the history of interpretation of 1 Cor 7:21, see Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves*, 74–108; Byron, *Recent Research*, 92–115.

[65] S. Scott Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21*, SBLDS 11 (Missoula, MT: SBL Press, 1973), 96–114.

[66] Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves*, 88–89. Harrill cites the following passages: Strabo 14.1.38; Appian *Bell. civ.* 1.26, 54, 58, 65, 69; Plut. *Mar.* 42.4 [42.2].

[67] Keith R. Bradley, "The Problem of Slavery in Classical Culture," *CP* 92.3 (1997): 273–82, esp. 276. Bradley affirms the "use freedom" interpretation.

Since he does not believe that slaves had a choice in their manumission, Bartchy actually does not support either the "use slavery" or the "use freedom" interpretation. Instead, he opts for a novel reading which ties μᾶλλον χρῆσαι back to τῇ κλήσει in 7:20. According to Bartchy, 7:21 should be understood as follows: "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't worry about it. But if, indeed, you become manumitted, by all means [as a freedman] live according to [God's calling]."[68] However, as C. K. Barrett notes, Bartchy has not given sufficient weight to Paul's use of the verb δύνασαι.[69] Moreover, as Horrell observes, the fact that slaves could not refuse manumission does not mean that they had no role in securing manumission.[70] On the contrary, manumission is routinely presented in our sources as a reward for good service.[71] Furthermore, a slave could purchase freedom through saving money in his *peculium*.[72] Horrell summarizes the situation well: "The socio-historical context seems to make the advice 'stay a slave' highly

[68] Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ,* 183.

[69] C. K. Barrett, "Review of S. Scott Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ: First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of I Corinthians 7:21*," *JTS* 26.1 (1975): 173–74. For Bartchy's interpretation of δύναμαι in 1 Cor 7:21, see *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ,* 176–77.

[70] David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 165–66. Bartchy acknowledges, "A person in slavery was able to choose from a number of ways by which he could encourage his owner to manumit him" [*ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ*, 97, 119]. However, Bartchy does not seem to recognize that this observation undermines his critique of the "use freedom" interpretation [*ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ,* 96–120, 176].

[71] For example, a certain papyrus speaks of the slave who "in the hope of manumission wants to please [his master]" (BGU 4.1141.24) and others reference slaves who were manumitted "on account of their goodwill and affection" (P.Scholl 5.3; P.Col. 10.267.5). Translations from Arzt-Grabner, "Everyday Life," 222–23.

[72] In a discourse by Dio Chrysostom, a slave asks, "Do you not think I could liberate myself?" His interlocutor replies, "Yes, if you should raise the money somewhere to pay your master with" (*Or.* 15.22; Cohoon, LCL]). See also Tac. *Ann.* 14.42.

improbable, even nonsensical, whereas the advice to make use of the opportunity to become free is entirely unexceptional."[73]

A second key contribution to this debate is Harrill's 1995 philological analysis. Harrill first identifies fourteen passages from the TLG corpus in which the terms μᾶλλον and χράομαι appear together. He then demonstrates that this construction in usually used to indicate a new course of action which must be taken because of a new situation. Since Paul in 1 Cor 7:21 draws an explicit contrast between two different situations (δοῦλος ἐκλήθης ... ἀλλ᾽ εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι), the phrase μᾶλλον χρῆσαι is most naturally understood as standing in contrast to the prior action (μή σοι μελέτω), not the new situation (εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι).[74] Thus the meaning is not, "use slavery instead of obtaining freedom," but rather, "use freedom instead of not being concerned."

In a 2008 survey of scholarship, John Byron observes that since the publication of Harrill's monograph, "There does not seem to be anyone who opts for the 'use slavery' interpretation."[75] Indeed, there is little to commend this interpretation. John Chrysostom argues that the prior statement in 1 Cor 7:20 indicates that the slave should remain in his or her current state.[76] However, as Horrell observes, Paul has throughout the chapter "explicitly mentioned

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[73] Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 166. Harrill likewise observes that the "use slavery" interpretation renders Paul's words "exceedingly radical, unparalleled in extant ancient literature" [*Manumission of Slaves*, 121]. Note that while Theodoret of Cyrus adopts the "use slavery" interpretation, he assumes this must be an "exaggeration" (τὴν ὑπερβολὴν; *Interp. epist.* 82:280.7–15). Translation from Hill, *Theodoret*, 1:186.

[74] Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves*, 108–21.

[75] Byron, *Recent Research*, 114. Aasgaard likewise claimed in 2004 that Harrill and Horrell's contributions had "settled the debate" [*"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!,"* 253]. Brookins observed in 2017 that the "use freedom" interpretation is now held by "a vast majority of commentators" ["(Dis)Correspondence," 196–97].

[76] *Hom. 1 Cor.* 19.4 [61:157.19–22; *NPNF*[1] 12:109].

permissible exceptions to the general advice to 'stay as you are.'"[77] The second half of 7:21 seems to be just such an exception, occasioned by the prevalence of manumission.[78]

In summary, the emerging consensus that 1 Cor 7:21 urges slaves to "use freedom" is well-founded. What then is the significance of this verse for the interpretation of Philemon? Bruce W. Winter proposes that Paul's command in 7:21, together with his command in 7:23, indicate that he is critical of the institution of slavery. Winter argues that even though Paul urges all slaves to seek manumission (7:21), manumission was not always desirable for the slave. Furthermore, Winter argues that 7:23 prohibits the free from selling themselves into slavery as a means of social or economic advancement.[79] Thus, according to Winter, Paul (1) exhorted slaves to seek freedom, even when manumission conferred no benefit, and (2) prohibited the free from entering slavery, even when that slavery offered an advantage. Winter concludes that Paul "believed that there was something inherently wrong in slavery."[80]

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[77] Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 163–64. Horrell cites 1 Cor 7:5, 9, 11, 15, 28, 36, 39. So also Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves*, 123–26.

[78] Manumission was a common practice, and it is referenced frequently throughout the extant literature (Diog. Laert. 10.21; Pliny *Ep.* 4.10; 7.32.1; 8.16.1; Tac. *Ann.* 14.42; etc.). Cicero asserts that six years is an uncharacteristically long time for prisoners of war to remain in slavery "if they are well behaved and conscientious" (*Phil*. 8.11 [8.32; Bailey, LCL]). Pseudo-Aristotle advises that "every slave" should have a fixed term of his labor so that he will work harder with this "prize of freedom before him" (*Oec.* 1.5 [1344B; Armstrong, LCL]). Philodemus, however, does not believe this is necessary (*Prop.* 10.12–14).

[79] Bruce W. Winter, "St. Paul as a Critic of Roman Slavery in 1 Corinthians 7:21–23," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on St. Paul and European Civilization*, Pauvleia 3 (Varia, 1998), 340–52. Bartchy also believes that 1 Cor 7:23 may prohibit voluntary self-enslavement [*ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ,* 181–82]. Harrill considers this possibility, but is unconvinced [*Manumission of Slaves,* 87].

[80] Winter, "St. Paul as a Critic," 351.

Winter's thesis is intriguing, but I remain skeptical. Evidently some freemen did voluntarily enter slavery and some slaves did turn down opportunities to be free.[81] Nevertheless, the phrase μή σοι μελέτω in 7:21 seems to indicate that Paul is specifically addressing the slaves who consider their servile status to be a disadvantage. Furthermore, ancient authors often describe as slaves those who pander to others.[82] Thus in 1 Cor 7:23, Paul may simply be contrasting slavery to Christ with the desire to please other people. Note that Paul makes this contrast explicit in Gal 1:10. Finally, even though Clement is familiar with 1 Corinthians, he does not seem to be aware of any prohibition against voluntarily entering slavery.[83] On the contrary, he praises the "many" Christians who have "placed themselves in slavery and fed others with the purchase price they received" (1 Clem. 55:2 [Ehrman, LCL]).

At any rate, regardless of whether or not 1 Cor 7:21 betrays a fundamental opposition to slavery, this verse clearly indicates that Paul saw the value of manumission for the Christian slave. Thus, while 1 Cor 7:21 does not prove that Paul wanted Philemon to manumit Onesimus, it is certainly consistent with that hypothesis.

6.4. Conclusion

My analysis of Paul's language in Phlm 16 highlights an important difference between this epistle and the *Haustafeln*. As I have argued above, Paul's words in Phlm 16 can easily be read as a call to manumit Onesimus. The *Haustafeln*, by contrast, clearly assume the

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[81] On freemen voluntarily entering slavery, see Section 7.6 below. On slaves preferring to remain in slavery, see Note 20 in Section 6.1 above.

[82] See Epict. *Diatr.* 4.1.144–152 [cf. Sen. Y. *Ep.* 47.14]; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 51.1; Mus. Ruf. 7.17–19; Chrys. *Hom. Titus* 2.3.6–11 [62:675.6–11]. Some of these passages were brought to my attention by Craig S. Keener, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 69.

[83] Clement explicitly refers to 1 Cor 1:12 in 1 Clem. 47:1–3.

continuation of slavery. Nevertheless, despite this difference, the commands to masters in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 exhibit a remarkable similarity to Phlm 16. All three commands are surprisingly vague, and all invite radical interpretations. If pressed literally, each command threatens to erase any distinction between master and slave.

Contrast these three commands with the command to Christian masters which is included in the Didache, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Apostolic Constitutions: "Do not give orders to your male slave or female servant out of bitterness [ἐν πικρίᾳ]" (Barn. 19.7 [Ehrman, LCL]; cf. Did. 4.10; *Const. apost.* 7.13). There is nothing in the least unusual about such a command. "Harshness [πικρίας] toward servants" is included by Plutarch in a list of widely recognized vices such as "licentiousness," "passionate anger," and "distrust towards household and kinsmen" (*Adul. amic.* 9 [*Mor*. 53E; Babbitt, LCL]).

The Pauline commands, on the other hand, are far from conventional. Recall again Philo's description of the Essenes:

> Not a single slave is to be found among them, but all are free, *exchanging services with each other*, and they denounce the owners of slaves, not merely for their *injustice* [ἀδίκων] in outraging the law of *equality* [ἰσότητα], but also for their impiety in annulling the statute of Nature, who mother-like has born and reared all men alike, and created them *genuine brothers*, not in mere name, but in very reality. (*Good Person* 79 [Colson, LCL])[84]

This brief passage contains parallels to each one of the three Pauline commands to slave owners. Philo mentions mutual service (cf. Eph 6:9), justice and equality (cf. Col 4:1), and the brotherhood of master and slave (cf. Phlm 16). Philo's words illustrate not only the natural connection between the ideals of mutuality, equality, and brotherhood, but also the tension which exists between these ideals and slavery.

[84] Emphasis mine.

In summary, the exhortations found in Phlm 16, Col 4:1, and Eph 6:9 betray a consistent and distinctive strategy. The authors do not explicitly command masters to manumit their slaves, but neither do they fall back on conventional notions of benevolent rulership. Instead, they issue vague and provocative exhortations which, if taken seriously, seem impossible to fulfill within the constraints of the slave/master hierarchy. In the next chapter, I will consider *why* these authors adopt such a strategy.

CHAPTER 7:
The Dilemma of Christian Slavery

In Chapter 6, I argued that the vague and provocative language employed in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 is not the result of careless accident, but is instead consistent with the strategy attested in Paul's epistle to Philemon. But what is the explanation for such a strategy? If the authors of these epistles truly desired equality between master and slave, why did they not simply command Christian masters to manumit their slaves?

In an article on Philemon, Craig S. de Vos emphasizes that merely manumitting Onesimus would not have automatically made him a "beloved brother" (Phlm 16).[1] Manumission simply transformed the slave/master relationship into a patron/client relationship.[2] Paul's epistle to Philemon is routinely compared with Pliny's epistle to Sabinianus (*Ep.* 9.21; see also 9.24), but as de Vos observes, the man for whom Pliny intercedes is a freedman, not a slave. Despite having been manumitted, this man still lives in his former master's house and is clearly

[1] De Vos, "Once a Slave." So also Taylor, "Onesimus," 269; Barth and Blanke, *Philemon*, 421; Moo, *Letters*, 436. On the status of freedmen, see also Sam Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons: A New Rhetoric Analysis on Paul's Slave Metaphors in His Letter to the Galatians*, StBibLit 81 (New York: Lang, 2005), 49–52, 57–58; R. Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free: The Concept of Manumission and the Status of Manumitted Slaves in the Ancient Greek World, Mnemosyne* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 41–47; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1304–1306.

[2] The Roman lawyer Ulpian compares the respect which a freedman owes to his former master with the respect which a son owes to his father (*Dig.* 37.15.9). Elsewhere, Ulpian urges governors to take seriously any complaints filed by patrons against their freedmen, for "if a freedman is ungrateful, the patron should not have to see his behavior go unpunished" (*Dig.* 37.14.1). When certain masters accused their freedmen of not paying them proper respect, Claudius went so far as to return the freedmen to slavery without a trial (Suet. *Claud.* 25.1). Translation from Alan Watson, *The Digest of Justinian*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 3:315.

in a subservient position.[3] In his analysis of Philemon, John M. G. Barclay asserts, "The social realities of slavery would make it well nigh impossible to apply Paul's own understanding of 'brotherhood' to the relationship between master and slave."[4] However, as de Vos argues, the dilemma which Barclay describes would remain even if Philemon manumitted Onesimus.[5] Masters did not serve their slaves (cf. Gal 5:13), but neither did patrons serve their freedmen. Slaves did not admonish their masters (cf. Gal 6:1), but neither did freedmen admonish their patrons. De Vos thus concludes that Paul does not request the manumission of Onesimus because he desires something "far more radical than manumission."[6]

While I agree that manumission would not by itself transform Onesimus and Philemon into "beloved brothers," de Vos goes too far when he asserts that manumission "would not have made any significant difference to the actual relationship between Philemon and Onesimus."[7] Consider Pliny's comments concerning the quality of food served at his table. Pliny states, "I serve the same to everyone, for when I invite guests it is for a meal, not to make class distinctions; I have brought them as equals to the same table, so I give them the same treatment in everything." His interlocutor replies, "Even the freedmen?" Pliny responds, "Of course, for then they are my fellow-diners, not freedmen" (*Ep.* 2.6.3–4 [Radice, LCL]). This exchange demonstrates the social inferiority of freedmen, but it also demonstrates the enormous divide that existed between slaves and freedmen. At least the freedmen are seated at the table, being treated by Pliny as if they were

[3] Elsewhere, Pliny himself states that he seeks to be "as gentle as a father" towards a certain freedman in his household (*Ep.* 5.19.1–2 [Radice, LCL]).

[4] Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 177–80. See also Glancy, *Moral Problem*, 35.

[5] De Vos, "Once a Slave," 91–101.

[6] De Vos, "Once a Slave," 104. So also Burtchaell, *Philemon's Problem*, 32–33: "Paul's demand required of believers endlessly more than abolition."

[7] De Vos, "Once a Slave," 104.

his equals. Pliny's interlocutor never mentions slaves because he assumes that slaves are not at the table.[8]

In conclusion, observations concerning the social inferiority of freedmen do little to explain why Paul or his imitators do not require manumission. Manumission might not have produced social equality, but it was a significant step in that direction.[9] Thus our question still remains: if the Pauline authors truly desired equality between master and slave, why did they not simply command Christians to free their slaves?[10] In this chapter, I turn to the social and rhetorical context of the epistles to answer this question.

7.1. The Material Security of Slavery

Masters were expected to provide for the basic needs of their slaves.[11] As Epictetus observes, however, a freedman might struggle to find food (*Diatr.* 4.1.34–37).[12] Elderly slaves who were too old to work would no doubt have had a particularly difficult time supporting themselves in freedom.[13] Even Keith Bradley, who emphasizes the brutality of Roman slavery,

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[8] On table fellowship with slaves, see the discussion in Section 4.3.1 above.

[9] As discussed in Section 6.3 above, 1 Cor 7:21 demonstrates that Paul saw the value of manumission.

[10] I use the term "Pauline authors" to refer collectively to the authors of Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians. The use of this term is not intended to signal a particular stance on the debates concerning the authorship of the latter two epistles.

[11] See Cic. *Off.* 1.41; Arist. [*Oec.*] 1.5.3 [1344A.35–B.4]; Philod. *Prop.* 9.44–10.2; Sen. Y. *Ben.* 3.21.1–2; 3.22.3; *Tranq*. 8.8; Chrys. *Hom. Phlm.* Arg. [62:704.5–6]. See the discussion in Section 3.1.6 above.

[12] Epictetus was himself a former slave. On the superiority of material hardship in freedom over material comfort in slavery, see Phaedr. *3.7* [cited in Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons*, 57].

[13] Consider the description of an elderly slave in the following passage from Plutarch: "A kindly man will take good care of his horses even when they are worn out with age, and of his dogs, too, not only in their puppyhood, but when their old age needs nursing. ... I certainly would not sell even an ox that had worked for me, just because he was old, much less an elderly man,

acknowledges that the slaves of wealthy Romans "were probably better off materially than many of the free poor."[14] Thus scholars often suggest that Paul did not require manumission because manumission would not have necessarily benefited the slave.[15]

The following passage from John Chrysostom lends some credibility to this theory:

> In what, I ask, does the rich man differ from the poor? Does he not have one body to clothe? one belly to feed? ... If he had many stomachs to fill, perhaps he might have something to say, as that his need was more and the necessity of expense greater. But even "now they may," says one, "reply, that they fill many bellies, those of their domestics, those of their hand-maidens." But this is done, not through need nor for humanity's sake, but from mere pride. ... For why do you have many servants? ... For to that end did God grant us both hands and feet, that we might not stand in need of servants. Since not at all for need's sake was the class of slaves introduced, else even along with Adam had a slave been formed; but it is the penalty of sin and the punishment of disobedience. But when Christ came, He put an end also to this. "For in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free" [Gal 3:28]. So that it is not necessary to have a slave: or if it be at all necessary, let it be about one only, or at the most two. What mean the swarms of servants? ... However, I will not be too exact. We will allow you to keep a second servant. But if you collect many, you do it not for humanity's sake, but in self-indulgence. *Since if it be in care for them, I bid you occupy none of them in ministering to yourself, but when you have purchased them and have taught them trades whereby to support themselves, let them go free*. But when you scourge, when you put them in chains, it is no longer a work of humanity. (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.5 [61:353.29–354.18])[16]

In this passage, the master who acts "for humanity's sake" does not release his slaves immediately. Instead, he first teaches them skills which they can use to earn a living in freedom. The implication is that in the absence of such skills, release would not be in the best interest of the slaves.

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removing him from his habitual place and customary life, as it were from his native land, for a paltry price" (*Cat. Maj.* 5.2, 6 [Perrin, LCL]).

[14] Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 15.

[15] So Taylor, "Onesimus," 271; Barth and Blanke, *Philemon*, 368–69; Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 253; Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!,"* 253; White, "Philemon," 34.

[16] Translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 12:248. Emphasis mine. This passage was brought to my attention in Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics*, 65.

Nevertheless, a master could manumit a slave without sending him from the household. Pliny's letters, for example, reference several freedmen who remain members of their former masters' households (*Ep.* 5.19.1–2; 9.21; 9.24). If a freedman was content to continue in his current occupation and did not desire to leave the house, the master need not send him away. Thus observations concerning the material advantages of slavery do little to explain why Paul or his imitators did not require manumission.

7.2. The Legal Restrictions on Manumission

With few exceptions, Roman law did not permit a master who was under the age of twenty to free his slaves (Gaius *Inst.* 1.40). The young master was legally barred, not only from formal manumissions resulting in Roman citizenship, but also from informal manumissions performed at home (Gaius *Inst.* 1.36–41).[17] Furthermore, it was apparently not uncommon for a young man to own slaves. In a study of funerary inscriptions, Richard P. Saller estimates that Roman men typically entered marriage rather late in life. According to Saller, the evidence tends to support the following pattern: "Men begin to marry in significant numbers in their mid or late

[17] Roman slaves could receive citizenship upon manumission. However, a formal ceremony was required which was subject to various restrictions. First of all, there was a tax, which was sometimes paid by the master (Epict. *Diatr.* 2.1.26) and sometimes by the slave (Epict. *Diatr.* 4.1.33). Furthermore, except under special circumstances, the slave had to be at least thirty years of age (Gaius *Inst.* 1.17). If a Roman slave under thirty was manumitted, he received the intermediate status of Junian Latin (Gaius *Inst.* 1.22). A Latin could still become a full citizen if he met certain conditions. For example, if a Latin married a woman of the same or higher status and fathered a son, he could become a citizen when his son turned one year old (Gaius *Inst.* 1.29). The former master could also give the Latin citizenship by repeating the manumission ceremony after the Latin turned thirty (Gaius *Inst.* 1.35). Roman citizenship was obviously a valuable benefit, as illustrated by the narratives in Acts (16:37–38; 22:25–29; 23:27; 25:11). On the legal status of Junian Latins and their children, see Paul Weaver, "Children of Junian Latins," in *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space,* ed. Beryl Rawson and Paul Weaver (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 55–72. For a translation of Gaius, see Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery,* 23–29.

twenties, with a median age at first marriage around thirty and many postponing marriage until after thirty."[18] Such late marriages, combined with the low life expectancy in the ancient world, meant that many fathers died while their children were still young.[19] In a study on family in the Roman world, Saller and Peter Garnsey write,

> A computer simulation incorporating the Roman demographic variables suggests that the average difference in age between father and child was about forty years. By the time children reached their late teens or early twenties ... more than half had already lost their fathers.[20]

Thus it was evidently not uncommon for a Roman child to inherit his father's estate prior to turning twenty. If the Pauline authors had required all Christians to manumit their slaves, such young masters would not be legally permitted to obey.[21]

7.3. The Reputation of the Community

Since subordinate members of a household were expected to follow the religion of the *paterfamilias*, the Christian churches were already vulnerable to accusations of subverting the household order. Plutarch explains that a wife is expected "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" (*Conj. praec.* 19 [*Mor.* 140D; Babbitt, LCL]).[22] In his polemic against Christianity,

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[18] Richard P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 36–38. See also Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture*, 2nd ed. (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 155.

[19] Saller concurs with the "standard view" that the average life expectancy at birth in the Roman world was around twenty-five years, and he finds it unlikely that this number differed substantially between the rich and poor [*Patriarchy, Property and Death*, 20–21].

[20] Garnsey and Saller, *Roman Empire*, 161.

[21] See also Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, 181–82.

[22] On the expectation that wives follow the religion of their husbands, see also Dion. Hal. *Ant. rom.* 2.25.2; *laudatio 'Turiae'* Col. 1.30–31. Juvenal derides women who eagerly follow after

Celsus states that the Christians target children (as well as "stupid" women) and encourage them to reject the teachings of their fathers. Celsus describes this as enticing the children not to "pay any attention to their father" but instead to "rebel" (Origen *Cels.* 3.55).[23] Cato writes that the *vilicus*, the slave who managed the master's estate, should "perform no religious rites" nor "consult a fortune-teller, or prophet, or diviner, or astrologer" (*Agr.* 5.3–4 [Hooper and Ash, LCL]).[24] Later in the same work, the *vilicus* is instructed to make sure that the housekeeper (a female slave) also does not participate in any unsanctioned religious rituals: "She must not engage in religious worship herself or get others to engage in it for her without the orders of the master or the mistress; let her remember that the master attends to the devotions for the whole household" (143.1–2).

The expectation that slaves follow the religion of the *paterfamilias* and avoid any unsanctioned cultic practices no doubt created difficulties for Christian slaves living in non-Christian households.[25] Recall that in 1 Peter, the author devotes a significant amount of space to exhorting and encouraging those slaves who "do right and suffer for it" (2:20; NRSV). Given this context, it is easy to see how an explicit repudiation of slavery could make life even more

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fortune tellers or the leaders of mystery cults, often to the disadvantage of their own husbands (*Sat.* 6.512–91). On Christian wives in non-Christian households, see 1 Cor 7:12–16; 1 Pet 3:1–2. On Christianity as an "outlandish superstition," note Pliny's description of Christianity as "a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths" (*Ep.* 10.96.8 [Radice, LCL]; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.44). For the text and English translation of *laudatio 'Turiae'*, see *NewDocs* 3:33–35. The passage from Juvenal was brought to my attention by Ben Witherington.

[23] Translation from Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 165–66. For a discussion of Celsus' critique, see Hurtado, *Destroyer*, 29–34, 184. Tacitus makes a similar accusation against the Jews. Concerning those Gentiles who are converted to Judaism, Tacitus writes, "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" (*Hist.* 5.5 [Moore, LCL]). See the discussion in Section 2.4.4 above.

[24] So also Colum. *Rust.* 11.22.

[25] On the tensions which resulted when subordinate members of a non-Christian household converted to Christianity, see the discussion in Sandnes, "Equality," 153–56.

difficult for those slaves who lived in non-Christian households. If a pagan master discovered that the "outlandish superstition" (Plut. *Conj. praec.* 19 [*Mor*. 140D]) in which his slaves participated was one in which, like the Essenes, "they denounce the owners of slaves" for "their injustice in outraging the law of equality" (Philo *Good Person* 79 [Colson, LCL]), he would surely be even less inclined to permit their attendance![26]

7.4. The Presence of Nominal Christian Slaves

As explained in the previous section, the subordinate members of the household were expected to adopt the religion of the *paterfamilias*. Thus it is no surprise that the NT often presents conversion as a family affair.[27] In Acts 16:31–34, for example, the author states no less than four times that the conversion of the jailer involved his entire household. Similar episodes occur throughout Acts, and Paul's undisputed letters confirm this aspect of his ministry.[28] In such household conversions, it is unlikely that every single member of the family accepted Paul's gospel with the same level of comprehension or enthusiasm. As Karl Olav Sandnes observes, "Some members of the household may well have been converted due to social relationships

[26] As Jerry L. Sumney observes, the Therapeutae and Essenes could reject slavery because, unlike the Christians, they did not "stay engaged with the world" [*Colossians*, 247; cf. Philo *Contempl. Life* 70–71; *Good Person* 79]. Note that in his commentary on the Ephesian *Haustafel*, Jerome explains that Paul exhorted slaves to be obedient in order "that he might not appear to stir up the class of slaves against their masters" (*Comm. Eph.* 6:5–8; cf. 1 Tim 6:1; Titus 2:9-10; Chrys. *Hom. Phlm.* Arg. [62:704.19–23]). The translation of Jerome is from Heine, *Origen and Jerome*, 250.

[27] Sandnes, "Equality," 151–53.

[28] Acts 10:24; 11:14; 16:15; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16; 16:15.

rather than out of personal conviction."[29] Some slaves may have even accepted the Christian religion in the hopes of increasing their chances of manumission.[30]

Given this context, Paul may not always have considered it desirable for a Christian master to release his slaves into the world. If the master was a firm believer who was actively participating in Paul's ministry, and the slave was an unbeliever or a nominal believer who was only marginally engaged in the Christian community, Paul may very well have preferred for the slave to stay with the master. Recall Paul's advice in 1 Cor 7:12–14 to a husband or a wife whose spouse is an unbeliever. In this passage, Paul explains that the presence of even one believer in a household has the potential to positively impact the unbelieving members of that household.

Onesimus was a Christian who was apparently committed to Paul's ministry (Phlm 10–13; Col 4:9), but if Paul explicitly directed Philemon to manumit Onesimus *because he was a brother,* this would imply that Philemon should manumit all of his Christian slaves. Furthermore, as Barclay observes, any of Philemon's slaves who were not Christians "would soon make sure they got 'converted.'"[31] The problem is even more acute for the authors of the *Haustafeln,* for they are writing general exhortations for the entire community. The authors of the *Haustafeln*

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[29] Sandnes, "Equality," 152. So also Taylor, "Onesimus," 279. Early Christian literature clearly attests a concern to evangelize unbelieving slaves, keep them from apostatizing, and increase their religious commitment. Both the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas exhort masters to be gentle with their slaves, "lest they stop fearing the God who is over you both" (Did. 4.10; Barn. 19.7 [Ehrman, LCL]). The second-century Christian philosopher Aristides describes the Christians as follows: "If one or other of them have bondmen and bondwomen or children, through love towards them they persuade them to become Christians, and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction" (*Apol*. 15; *ANF* 9:276). The Apostolic Constitutions speak of the Christian who goes to the market "to purchase a slave, and save a soul" (2.62; *ANF* 7:424). Chrysostom urges masters to take their slaves to church and "teach them to be religious" (*Hom. Eph*. 22 [62.157.61–158.9]; *NPNF*[1] 13:159).

[30] On slaves seeking to secure manumission by pleasing their masters, see the discussion in Section 6.3 above.

[31] Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 176.

could hardly specify that masters should manumit only those Christian slaves who were fully committed to the faith. The authors could offer no objective criteria to distinguish committed Christian slaves from nominal Christian slaves, and any attempt to make such distinctions would surely embitter those slaves who were deemed insufficiently religious. Furthermore, requiring masters to manumit their Christian slaves would create an economic incentive against converting slaves. A master who knew that he would lose his slaves as soon as they became "brothers" might not be in any particular hurry to see them baptized.[32]

7.5. The Economics of Manumission

In an article on Philemon, Barclay emphasizes, "Paul's churches depended on patrons wealthy enough to provide homes as meeting-places for Christians."[33] As mentioned above, Barclay argues that if Philemon were required to manumit all of his Christian brothers, the rest of his slaves "would soon make sure they got 'converted.'" Thus Philemon might find himself

[32] This was the situation in the American colonies. "One of the principal reasons for the refusal of English planters to allow their slaves to receive instructions [in the Christian faith] was the fear that baptism would emancipate their slaves. The notion that if slaves were baptized, 'they should, according to the laws of the *British* nation, and the canons of its church' be freed was legally vague but widely believed. Repeatedly, would-be missionaries to the slaves complained that slaveholders refused them permission to catechize their slaves because baptism made it necessary to free them" [Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 98; quoted phrase from John Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea* (London, 1732), 271]. Even when laws were passed clarifying that conversion did not necessitate release, many slave owners were still reluctant to permit the evangelization of slaves. "The most serious obstacle to the missionary's access to the slaves was the slaveholder's vague awareness that a Christian slave would have some claim to fellowship, a claim that threatened the security of the master-slave hierarchy." Missionaries responded to this resistance by arguing that Christianity would make the converts better slaves [Raboteau, *Slave Religion,* 102–3]. Raboteau's research was brought to my attention by Craig S. Keener.

[33] As discussed in Section 2.4.2 above, the very existence of the *Haustafeln* points to the importance of the household for the Christian communities. A house church is also mentioned explicitly in Col 4:15.

"without any slaves at all" and be left in a position in which he "could not possibly maintain a house of sufficient size" to host the Christian gatherings (Phlm 2).[34] Even if Barclay exaggerates the consequences of manumission, Philemon would probably have experienced at least some economic loss if he manumitted most of his slaves.[35] Of course the same is true for the masters addressed in the *Haustafeln*.

Furthermore, even if manumission did not have severe economic consequences for the church's patrons, the Pauline authors may have still had reservations about requiring slave owners to surrender their legal property. Recall that when Paul appealed to the Corinthians to contribute to his collection for the churches in Judea, he was careful to state, "I do not say this as a command" (2 Cor 8:8; cf. 9:7).[36] While Paul likely sensed "the tension between the realities of slavery and the demands of brotherhood," he certainly did not view Christian slave owners as wicked villains who deserved to be penalized.[37] The following episode from Plutarch reveals the vast difference between the ancient and modern view of slave ownership:

> The Achaeans voted Titus many honours, none of which seemed commensurate with his benefactions except one gift, and this caused him as much satisfaction as all the rest put together. And this was the gift: The Romans who were unhappily taken prisoners in the war with Hannibal had been sold about hither and thither, and were serving as slaves. In Greece there were as many as twelve hundred of them. The change in their lot made them pitiful objects always, but then even more than ever, naturally, when they fell in with sons, or brothers, or familiar friends, as the case might be, slaves with freemen and captives with victors. *These men Titus would not take away from their owners, although he was*

[34] Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 176. Ben Witherington argues that Barclay has overstated the economic consequences of manumission [*Letters to Philemon*, 88].

[35] The master could expect some services from his freedman which might offset the loss of a slave. Nevertheless, as Bradley observes, the manumission of a slave probably still involved a net loss for the master, which is why the slave was often required to pay a sum for his manumission [*Slaves and Masters*, 106]. On slaves purchasing manumission, see the discussion in Section 6.3 above.

[36] On the voluntary nature of Christian giving, see also Acts 5:4; Just. Mart. *1 Apol.* 67.6–7.

[37] The quoted phrase is from Barclay, "Paul, Philemon," 186. On the difference between the modern and ancient view of slave owners, see also White, "Philemon," 34.

> *distressed at their condition*, but the Achaeans ransomed them all at five minas the man, collected them together, and made a present of them to Titus just as he was about to embark, so that he sailed for home with a glad heart. (*Flam.* 13.5–9 [13.3–5; Perrin, LCL])[38]

According to Plutarch, though the Roman general Titus obviously desired to free his countrymen, he would not take them away from their lawful owners without compensation. It is plausible that a similar concern influenced the Pauline approach to slavery.

7.6. The Practice of Self-Sale

Both legal and literary sources describe freepersons selling themselves into slavery. After briefly discussing a few of these sources, J. Albert Harrill asserts, "Recent investigations of Roman historians have shown how historically unreliable such evidence is, and have discredited the scholarly commonplace, based on this evidence, that large numbers of freeborn persons sold themselves as chattels."[39] However, the single historian whom Harrill cites to support this claim (W. V. Harris) has since recanted, stating, "I was wholly mistaken about this matter."[40] Harris now believes that these various ancient sources "make it entirely plain that self-sale was commonplace."[41]

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[38] Emphasis mine. According to Livy, Titus explicitly asked the Achaean leaders to free these slaves (*Hist.* 34.50).

[39] Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves*, 31. Harrill discusses 1 Clem. 55:2, Dio Chrys. *Or.* 15.23, and Petron. *Sat.* 57. The prevalence of self-sale is also doubted by Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 80–85.

[40] W. V. Harris, *Rome's Imperial Economy: Twelve Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 73.

[41] Harris, *Rome's Imperial Economy*, 104. So also Jacques Ramin and Paul Veyne, "Droit romain et société: les hommes libres qui passent pour esclaves et l'esclavage volontaire," *Historia* 30.4 (1981): 472–97, esp. 472; Winter, "St. Paul as a Critic," 346. Nevertheless, classicists have generally not given much attention to this topic. Bradley does not even mention self-sale in his chapter on the source of slaves [*Slavery and Society at Rome*, 31–56]. On the lack of "scholarly interest," see Alice Rio, "Self-Sale and Voluntary Entry into Unfreedom, 300–1100," *JSocHist* 45.3 (2012): 661–85, esp. 661–662.

In a string of articles published from 2011 to 2016, the economist Morris Silver has argued that such "contractual slavery" was in fact extremely common in the Roman Empire.[42] I will briefly summarize three of Silver's arguments. First, Silver cites literary and epigraphic evidence indicating that "freeborn slaves originated primarily in Italy and Roman provinces." Since the acquisition of these slaves "cannot be attributed to Roman wars of aggression or to a breakdown in law and order permitting kidnappers and pirates to flourish," Morris concludes that the majority of these freeborn persons entered slavery voluntarily or were sold into slavery by their parents.[43] Second, Silver argues, "Rome's extensive *peculium* economy could not possibly have rested on a base as fragile and uncertain as self-supervised forcible captives."[44] Morris reasons that *peculia* would normally not be granted to such captives, who would likely use the money to escape. Thus Silver concludes that the "prevalence of *peculia*" indicates "the prevalence of contractual slavery."[45] He describes the *peculium* as "a contractual benefit desired by and typically made available to free men who volunteered for slavery."[46] Here Silver notes

[42] "Contractual Slavery in the Roman Economy," *AHB* 25 (2011): 73–132; "*Macula Servitutis*: The Selective Stain of Roman Slavery," *Hephaistos* 30 (2013): 53–61; "The Rise and Decline of the (Contractual) Slave Mode of Production in Central Italy," *RANT* 10 (2013): 389–410; "The Status of the *Incerti* in the Herculaneum *Album*: Freed Self-Sellers or Promoted Junian Latins?," *Hephaistos* 30 (2013): 105–15, esp. 110–11; "Places for Self-Selling in Ulpian, Plautus and Horace: The Role of Vertumnus," *Mnemosyne* 67 (2014): 577–87; "At the Base of Rome's *Peculium* Economy," *Fundamina* 22.1 (2016): 67–93; "Public Slaves in the Roman Army: An Exploratory Study," *Ancient Society* 46 (2016): 203–40, esp. 233–34; "The Role of Slave Markets in Migration from the Near East to Rome," *Klio* 98.1 (2016): 184–202. Silver also discusses contractual slavery in other ancient societies. See "What Makes Shabti Slave?," *JESHO* 52 (2009): 619–34; "Autonomous Slaves in Greco-Roman Legal and Economic History," *LR* 3 (2014): 233–67, esp. 262–63.

[43] Silver, "Contractual Slavery," 119. So also Silver, "Rise and Decline," 401–3.

[44] Silver, "At the Base," 71.

[45] Silver, "Contractual Slavery," 94.

[46] Silver, "At the Base," 75.

that while such a contractual benefit was made available to free Englishmen who entered indentured servitude in the eighteenth century, he can find "no historical episode in which *peculia* were granted to forcible captives."[47] Third, Silver cites archaeological evidence indicating that permanent Roman slave markets did not have "prison-like structures" for holding captives. He concludes that "those offered for sale" in such markets "were *typically* volunteers."[48]

Silver's bold thesis is intriguing and merits further exploration. Nevertheless, I am not convinced that volunteer slavery was as ubiquitous as Silver suggests. The grave stele of a certain slave trader named Aulus Caprilius Timothy shows a man, perhaps Timothy himself, leading a line of slaves.[49] The adult males are all in chains. Apparently these are captives, not volunteers. Of course Silver does not deny that some slaves were captives, but the stele presumably depicts a typical scene from Timothy's career. Thus the stele naturally suggests that the slave trade was characterized by captives in chains.[50]

Nevertheless, even if contractual slavery was not as common as Silver suggests, it is difficult to believe that the practice was unknown to the authors of the Pauline epistles. Since the various sources which allude to self-sale have been discussed at length in the studies cited above,

[47] Silver, "At the Base," 76.

[48] Silver, "Role of Slave Markets," 197. Emphasis his.

[49] Timothy is a freedman, and was thus once a slave himself. The stele was discovered in Amphipolis and is dated to the first century CE [Craig R. Koester, "Roman Slave Trade and the Critique of Babylon in Revelation 18," *CBQ* 70.4 (2008): 766–86, esp. 772].

[50] For an image of this stele and further discussion, see Koester, "Roman Slave Trade," 772–75; Joshel, *Slavery,* 90–92.

here I will simply list a few of the clearest examples.[51] First, according to Clement, "many" Christians have "placed themselves in slavery and fed others with the purchase price they received" (1 Clem. 55:2 [Ehrman, LCL]). Both Clement in Rome and his readers in Corinth evidently recognized that it was possible for a freeperson to sell himself into slavery and thereby receive money for his personal use.[52] Second, in a novel by Petronius, a certain freedman named Hermeros explains that he sold himself into slavery in order to become a Roman citizen and achieve a higher standard of living (*Sat*. 57).[53] Third, the Roman jurist Ulpian references places "frequented by those who declare themselves for sale" (*Dig*. 21.1.17.12).[54] Elsewhere Ulpian refers to the man who becomes a slave either through capture in war or because "he has allowed himself to be sold with a view to performing an act or sharing in the price" (*Dig*. 28.3.6.5).[55] Finally, in a discourse by Dio Chrysostom, the following assertion is made: "Great numbers of men, we may suppose, who are free-born sell themselves, so that they are slaves by contract, sometimes on no easy terms but the most severe imaginable" (*Or*. 15.23 [Cohoon, LCL]).[56]

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[51] See also Sen. Y. *Ben*. 4.13.3 and the discussion of this passage in Ramin and Veyne, "Droit romain et société," 472; Harris, *Rome's Imperial Economy*, 104; Silver, "Contractual Slavery," 84.

[52] Suppose a modern American pastor boasted that many in his congregation had sold their houses in order to purchase the pardons of inmates on death row. American audiences would recognize at once that this boast is a lie, for the legal situation it presupposes is impossible.

[53] Some freedmen achieved great wealth and success (e.g. Demetrius in Sen. Y. *Tranq*. 8.6–7). See Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 30–42.

[54] Translation from Watson, *Digest*, 2:148.

[55] Translation from Watson, *Digest*, 2:370. The legal regulation of self-sale in the Roman world is discussed briefly in Judith Spicksley, "The Decline of Slavery for Debt in Western Europe in the Medieval Period," in *Serfdom and Slavery in the European Economy 11th–18th Centuries*, ed. Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2014), 465–86, esp. 479–80.

[56] Harrill, followed by Jenifer A. Glancy, asserts that the slavery described by Dio is not chattel slavery but rather a form of indentured servitude [Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves*, 31; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 83]. However, regardless of how one chooses to label contractual

Furthermore, the region to which the *Haustafeln* are addressed is one in which the practice of self-sale may have been particularly common.[57] Harris observes that Asia Minor appears in the literature as the principal source of Roman slaves: "Over and over again we hear of the typical slave as a Cappadocian or a Phrygian."[58] As both Silver and Harris argue, kidnapping can hardly account for the majority of slaves from Roman provinces.[59] While natural reproduction in the slave population was no doubt an important source of new slaves, voluntary self-sale may have played a role as well. Consider the following insult found in Philostratus:

> Slaves from Pontus, Lydia, or Phrygia one can buy here, and you may meet droves of them all coming in this direction. Those races, like every race of barbarians, are always subject to others, and do not consider slavery a disgrace. The Phrygians in fact have the custom of selling even their own kin, and forgetting them once they have been enslaved. (*Vit. Apoll.* 8.7.563–70 [37; Jones, LCL])[60]

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slavery, the key question is whether or not the person who entered into such a contract became a legal slave. The context indicates that he or she did. The dialogue in which this passage appears begins when a certain slave (X) is taunted by a certain freeman (Y) for being a slave (15.1). X replies that Y cannot prove that X is actually a slave, for Y cannot prove that X is not a freeborn person who was taken at birth or later kidnapped (15.2–18). Furthermore, X argues that the fact that he is currently in a state of servitude does not make him a slave, for sons and pupils are not slaves despite the fact that they are in servitude to their fathers and teachers (15.18–20). X then states, "Even if I was once in a state of slavery *in the fullest sense of the term* and had been a slave justly from the very beginning, what is to prevent me now ... from being just as free as anybody else, and you in your turn ... from being an out-and-out slave?" (15.20; emphasis mine). Y acknowledges that X could be manumitted, but asks, "What do you mean by saying that I might become a slave?" (15.22). It is at this point that X cites the possibility of contractual slavery (15.23). If the freeman who entered into contractual bondage was something less than "an out-and-out slave," this example would utterly fail to establish the claim. For further critiques of Harrill's reading, see Winter, "St. Paul as a Critic," 345–46; Silver, "At the Base," 83–84.

[57] The words ἐν Ἐφέσῳ in Eph 1:1 are omitted by several early witnesses.

[58] Harris, *Rome's Imperial Economy*, 70.

[59] Harris, *Rome's Imperial Economy*, 73; Silver, "Contractual Slavery," 119; Silver, "Rise and Decline," 401–3. Harris emphasizes the importance of infant exposure as a source of slaves [*Rome's Imperial Economy*, 70–72].

[60] This passage was brought to my attention in Silver, "Contractual Slavery," 108.

Both Colossae and Laodicea (Col 4:16) were located in Phrygia, and Ephesus, which "played the greatest role" in exporting slaves from the region, was located on the southern border of Lydia.[61]

In NT scholarship, the practice of self-sale has often been discussed as a means of assessing the relative severity of slavery. In his influential study on slavery in the first century, S. Scott Bartchy cited the practice as evidence that Roman slavery "was often much better than modern men are inclined to think." Later in the same work, Bartchy asserted, "Most slaves were treated well."[62] Harrill challenged these claims, and Bartchy himself recently acknowledged that Bradley's research had changed his mind "about many aspects of the truly baleful and destructive consequences of ancient slavery."[63] Silver, however, explicitly denies that his thesis concerning the prevalence of self-sale indicates that the experience of slavery was "not so bad." Rather, Silver simply argues that slavery was sometimes the best available option.[64]

My interest in self-sale is not to make any judgement about the severity of slavery, but rather to explore the practical implications of a general command to manumit all Christian slaves. In the previous section, I argued that the authors of the *Haustafeln* might have been hesitant to require a master to surrender his legal property. Such a command would likely have been perceived as even more problematic if the slave in question had voluntarily entered slavery.

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[61] Harris, *Rome's Imperial Economy*, 78. On the slave trade in Ephesus, see also Koester, "Roman Slave Trade," 778–81. The slave market at Ephesus was one of those for which, as discussed above, Silver can find no evidence of a prison-like structure for holding captives ["Role of Slave Markets," 193–94].

[62] Bartchy, *ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΧΡΗΣΑΙ*, 46, 72.

[63] Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves*, 30–31, 94–102; S. Scott Bartchy, "Response to Keith Bradley's Scholarship on Slavery," *BibInt* 21.4–5 (2013): 529. For a critique of Bradley's depiction of slavery, see Niall McKeown, *The Invention of Ancient Slavery*, Duckworth Classical Essays (London: Duckworth, 2007), 77–96.

[64] Silver, "Contractual Slavery," 73–74, 119–20. See also Ramin and Veyne, "Droit romain et société," 496–97.

Why should the master be penalized for entering into a contract which was acceptable to the other party?

7.7. The Honor and Power of the Master

In his analysis of Paul's epistle to Philemon, Reidar Aasgaard asserts, "Since manumission was the alternative which demanded the most of Philemon, we should expect Paul to have been more explicit about it."[65] However, the opposite may be true. The fact that manumission "demanded the most of Philemon" may in fact be at least one of the reasons why Paul adopted such vague language. Drawing on insights from the field of linguistic pragmatics, Andrew Wilson suggests that the "lack of clarity" in Philemon may be due to politeness.[66] As Wilson explains, politeness involves framing one's discourse in such a way as to mitigate any "face threatening act," that is, any act such as a command or a criticism which threatens the self-image or social standing of the other person.[67] One strategy "is to avoid making the face threatening act explicitly 'on record' and leave it to the hearer's or reader's inference to determine what is being requested."[68] In another study on Philemon, Joel White also connects the "opaque style" of the epistle with a concern to protect Philemon's honor. Citing the importance of honor and shame in the first-century world, White argues that Paul sensed "a responsibility to protect the honour of Philemon in his role as *pater familias* and as patron of the church that met in his house."[69]

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[65] Aasgaard, "'Role Ethics' in Paul," 253.

[66] Wilson, "Pragmatics of Politeness," 116.

[67] Wilson, "Pragmatics of Politeness," 108–9.

[68] Wilson, "Pragmatics of Politeness," 116.

[69] White, "Philemon," 33–34.

James D. G. Dunn argues further that the open-ended nature of Paul's epistle allows Philemon to not only "maintain" but also "display" his honor.[70] By declining to spell out the specific implications of Onesimus' new status as a "beloved brother," Paul gives Philemon the opportunity to demonstrate his own benevolence and magnanimity towards Onesimus. As Philo observes, manumitting a slave could bring honor to the master: "It is a praiseworthy action when masters in the humaneness of their hearts release from the yoke of servitude their home-bred or purchased slaves, though often they have brought them no great profit" (*Spec. Laws* 4.15 [Colson, LCL]).[71] Note that Paul addresses the epistle to the entire church in Philemon's house (Phlm 2; cf. 23–24). Scholars often emphasize that Paul is exerting "social pressure" on Philemon.[72] However, by placing Philemon in the spotlight, Paul is not only increasing the pressure on Philemon to act in accordance with his request; he is also putting Philemon in a position where he can display his "goodness" (Phlm 14) to the entire community.[73]

In addition to positing a concern for Philemon's honor, scholars have also cited the absolute power that Philemon held over the future of his slave. Despite Paul's position as an apostle, he of course had no legal authority to compel Philemon to manumit Onesimus. As Wessels observes, "There was always the possibility that a blunt order, issued by an apostle in prison, requiring an enormous concession from the leader of a house church in Colossae, might

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[70] Dunn, *Paul*, 576. See also Dunn, *Colossians*, 323; Wessels, "Philemon," 165.

[71] This passage was brought to my attention in Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 138.

[72] Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, 99. So also Sandnes, "Equality," 157–58.

[73] On Philemon's opportunity to display his beneficence, see also Clarice J. Martin, "The Rhetorical Function of Commercial Language in Paul's Letter to Philemon (Verse 18)," in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, ed. Duane F. Watson, JSNTSup 50 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 321–37, esp. 327; David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 124–25.

be refused – with disastrous consequences for Paul's position of authority."[74] According to Wessels, Paul recognized this possibility and carefully framed his request in such a way that the manumission of Onesimus could be seen as "Philemon's own idea."[75] Similarly, White argues that Paul's indirect approach is part of a "conscious rhetorical strategy" to persuade Philemon to voluntarily manumit Onesimus.[76]

While these studies have focused on Paul's epistle to Philemon, the observations which have been made concerning the honor and power of the householder are of course relevant to the *Haustafeln*. In fact, the dilemma facing the authors of the *Haustafeln* is once again even more acute than the dilemma facing Paul in his address to Philemon. As Ben Witherington emphasizes, Paul already had an established relationship with Philemon.[77] The authors of the *Haustafeln*, by contrast, are writing general exhortations for entire communities. Note that the exhortations for husbands to love their wives and for fathers to be gentle with their children are largely in accordance with social norms and expectations.[78] A requirement to free slaves, on the other hand, would be extraordinary. The authors of the *Haustafeln* may have sensed that they were not in a position to issue such a command.

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[74] Wessels, "Philemon," 165. See also Keener, *Paul*, 206; Dunn, *Colossians*, 324.

[75] Wessels, "Philemon," 165.

[76] White, "Philemon," 33. So also Jeal, *Exploring Philemon*, 206–9. Witherington argues that Paul employs the rhetorical strategy of *insinuatio*, whereby he approaches the issue "indirectly so as not to offend or anger." As Witherington observes, Paul does not even mention Onesimus until verse 10 [*Letters to Philemon*, 62–64].

[77] Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 10–11, 185.

[78] On love for wives, see Ps.-Phoc. 195; *b. Yebam.* 62b; Mus. Ruf. 13A.2; Plut. *Conj. praec.* 34 [*Mor.* 142E–143A]; Ps.-Charondas 62.30; Pliny *Ep.* 4.19; 6.4, 7; 7.5; Cic. *Fam.* 6 [14.4]; 7 [14.2]; 9.5 [14.3]. On gentleness towards children, see Ps.-Phoc. 207–9, 150; Sen. Y. *Ira* 2.21.1–4; Philo *Hypothetica* 7.3; Plut. [*Lib. ed.*] 12 [*Mor.* 8F–9A]. Nevertheless, the emphasis in the *Haustafeln* on love for wives and gentleness towards children is unusual. See the discussions in Sections 2.3.2, 2.3.3, and 8.2.3.

7.8. Conclusion

As discussed in Chapter 6, the three commands to masters in the Pauline epistles are all strangely vague and provocative. Having explored the social and rhetorical context, I now propose an explanation for this distinctive approach: Christian slavery presented the Pauline authors with an intractable dilemma. On the one hand, they sensed the incongruity of Christian brothers living together as master and slave, but on the other hand, for one or more of the reasons discussed above, they felt that a command requiring manumission was inadvisable. It is this dilemma, and not careless accident, which provides the most plausible explanation for the peculiar language found in Phlm 16, Col 4:1, and Eph 6:9.

To be sure, there is little to suggest that the authors of these commands viewed the ownership of slaves as a sin. Furthermore, they evidently had no qualms about directing slaves to obey their masters. While we can only speculate about any instructions which Paul might have given to Onesimus, the fact that Paul sends the slave back to his master suggests that Onesimus is to submit to Philemon's authority (Phlm 12–14). Of course in the *Haustafeln*, the obedience of slaves is explicitly required. Given the Christian emphasis on humility and service, such exhortations to slaves are hardly surprising.[79]

However, while the act of serving one's brother as a slave fits comfortably within Christian ethics, the notion of ruling one's brother as a master is deeply problematic.[80] While the authors of the *Haustafeln* could have retreated from the ideal of brotherhood and simply issued conventional commands to treat slaves decently, they chose not to do so. Nevertheless, as stated above, they did not feel that they could require masters to manumit their slaves. With no clear

[79] See Matt 20:24–28; 23:11; Mark 10:41–45; John 13:1–15; 1 Cor 9:19; Gal 5:13; Phil 2:5–8; etc. See the discussion in Section 5.2 above.

[80] See the discussion in Section 6.1 above.

solution to the dilemma of Christian slavery, the authors chose to simply insist upon equality and mutuality without explaining how these ideals could be realized within the slave/master relationship. The result is a set of paradoxical commands which suggest that masters should treat their slaves as equals and even serve them.

The situation is somewhat different in the epistle to Philemon. Here Paul is addressing a master with whom he already has an established relationship. Furthermore, in contrast to the general exhortations found in the *Haustafeln*, the instructions in Philemon concern the treatment of only one slave. Thus Paul evidently felt that he could use language that strongly hinted at manumission. Nevertheless, he was still careful to word his epistle in such a way that it could not be read as an explicit and universal prohibition of Christian slavery.

CHAPTER 8:
Summary and Implications

This concluding chapter is composed of three sections. I begin by providing a summary of my argument. I then consider the implications of my thesis for unresolved questions concerning the origin and intention of the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln*. Finally, I offer a few simple reflections on the danger of bias for critical scholarship.

8.1. Summary

In Chapter 1, I began by observing a curious similarity between the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln*. Though the codes issue different commands to masters, both commands, if pressed literally, threaten to undermine any distinction between master and slave. In Col 4:1, masters are commanded to grant slaves ἰσότης, a word which elsewhere means "equality." In Eph 6:9, immediately after slaves are commanded to obey and serve their masters, these masters are commanded to "do the same things" (τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε) to their slaves. Thus Col 4:1 is easily read as a command to treat slaves as equals, and Eph 6:9 is easily read as a command to serve slaves. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 2, the large majority of scholars have promptly dismissed these interpretations. Since the *Haustafeln* clearly assume the continuation of slavery in the Christian community, these scholars insist that ἰσότης in Col 4:1 must mean merely "fairness," and the command to "do the same things" in Eph 6:9 cannot have been intended literally. No one, however, has attempted to explain why both *Haustafeln* at precisely the same point employ such vague and provocative language.

In Chapter 3, I explored the earliest extant interpretations of Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9. Surprisingly, this evidence has been almost entirely ignored in the modern discussion of these verses. While commentators often note in passing that John Chrysostom interpreted Eph 6:9 as a

command to serve slaves, many other references to Col 4:1 or Eph 6:9 are scattered throughout the early Christian literature, often in obscure texts which are not available in translation. I began by gathering all extant citations of Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 in the Greek literature prior to 500 CE. I also included several ancient translations (Latin, Syriac, and Coptic). After examining this material, I identified ten distinct sources for which a decision could be made concerning the author's interpretation of Col 4:1. I also identified six distinct sources for which a decision could be made concerning the author's interpretation of Eph 6:9. In five of the ten sources for Col 4:1, the author appears to understand the verse as a command to treat slaves as equals, not merely a command to treat them fairly.[1] Likewise, in three of the six sources for Eph 6:9, the author appears to understand the verse as a command to serve slaves.[2] These findings do not prove that the egalitarian interpretations of Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 are correct, but they do indicate that these interpretations are viable and must be taken seriously.

In Chapter 4, I examined the meaning of ἰσότης in Col 4:1. Commentators routinely make assertions about the meaning of ἰσότης, but a thorough analysis of the use of this term in the extant Greek literature has not been attempted. Using the digital TLG corpus, I first identified many passages in which ἰσότης appears in the context of slavery. In these passages, ἰσότης is never used to describe the proper treatment of slaves; instead, the term is consistently used to describe an equality which is understood to be fundamentally incompatible with the slave/master hierarchy. Next, I considered the claim that ἰσότης sometimes means fairness in a sense distinct from equality. I demonstrated that this claim is based on fallacies which are widely recognized in

[1] These five sources are Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Didymus the Blind, Pseudo-Chrysostom, and the Coptic Bohairic translation. See Sections 3.1 and 3.3 above.

[2] These three sources are Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrus. See Sections 3.2 and 3.3 above.

the field of lexical semantics. Scholars have failed to produce a single legitimate example outside of Col 4:1 in which ἰσότης does not mean equality. Finally, I turned to consider the meaning of ἰσότης in the specific context of Col 4:1. I challenged the popular claim that, because slavery is clearly not abolished, ἰσότης in this passage cannot mean equality. First, as discussed in Chapter 3, the Greek fathers who interpreted ἰσότης as equality in Col 4:1 evidently did not consider the command incompatible with slavery. Furthermore, first-century moralists who did not recommend the abolition of slavery nevertheless occasionally encouraged masters to view their slaves as equals. Finally, while the context of Col 4:1 indicates that slavery was not abolished, the context also contains strong suggestions of equality between master and slave (see esp. Col 3:11). Thus, while acknowledging that an open-ended command to grant slaves ἰσότης is highly unusual, I concluded that the context of Col 4:1 does not justify dismissing the overwhelming evidence of the extant Greek literature and adopting an otherwise unattested meaning for ἰσότης.

In Chapter 5, I considered the meaning of the command τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε (do the same things) in Eph 6:9. The strongest evidence for the literal reading of these words is the fact that the author of Ephesians chooses to introduce the *Haustafel* with an explicit call for mutual submission: ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (Eph 5:21). Much of the chapter is thus focused on refuting the recent claim that Eph 5:21 does not envision mutual submission but only one-directional submission to those in authority. I first examined the interpretation of the verse in the Greek patristic literature and demonstrated that the words ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις were consistently understood to require mutual submission. Furthermore, I refuted the popular claim that ὑποτάσσω is only used to describe submission to an authority figure. I also demonstrated the connection between ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις in Eph 5:21 and δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις in Gal 5:13, a command which is clearly mutual. Submission and slavery are routinely associated in the

patristic literature, and an examination of Greek literature more generally supports this connection. Given the distinctive Christian emphasis on mutual slavery and the author's choice to introduce the *Haustafel* with an explicit command for mutual submission, I concluded that the radical implications of the words τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε were likely intended.

In Chapter 6, I turned to Philemon, the only other text in the NT outside of Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 in which a master is instructed concerning his treatment of a slave. At the heart of this epistle is Paul's statement that Philemon should receive Onesimus "no longer as a slave but above a slave, a beloved brother" (οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν; Phlm 16). Unlike Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9, these words are widely recognized by scholars as both vague and provocative. After examining Phlm 16, I made the simple observation that the peculiar language employed by Paul is remarkably similar to the language employed in both Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9. In each of these three verses, the authors do not explicitly command masters to manumit their slaves, but neither do they fall back on conventional notions of benevolent rulership. Instead, they issue vague and provocative exhortations which, if taken seriously, seem impossible to fulfill within the constraints of the slave/master hierarchy. Thus, while acknowledging significant differences between Philemon and the *Haustafeln*, I proposed that the commands issued to masters in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 reflect a consistent and distinctively Pauline approach to slavery.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I offered an explanation for the approach to slavery outlined in Chapter 6. I first explored relevant social, legal, and economic aspects of slavery in the first century. I then proposed that Christian slavery presented the Pauline authors with an intractable dilemma. These authors felt that a conventional command to treat slaves decently would fall below the ideal of Christian brotherhood, but they also recognized that requiring the

manumission of slaves would have a number of negative consequences for the Christian community. With no clear solution to this dilemma, the authors of the *Haustafeln* chose to simply insist upon equality and mutuality without explaining how these ideals could be realized within the slave/master relationship. The result is a set of paradoxical commands which suggest that masters should treat their slaves as equals and even serve them.

8.2. Implications

In Chapter 2, I surveyed the state of scholarship on the Colossian and Ephesian *Haustafeln* and highlighted the lack of consensus. My survey was organized around five interrelated questions. I now return to these questions to consider the implications which my thesis has for the ongoing debate.

8.2.1. The Relationship Between the Colossian and Ephesian Haustafeln[3]

While I do not deny that there are significant differences between the two *Haustafeln*, my analysis suggests a substantial degree of continuity. Both Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 reflect the same distinctive approach to the slave/master relationship. While neither command overtly challenges the institution of slavery, both require Christian masters to act towards their slaves in ways which are fundamentally incompatible with the slave/master hierarchy. Thus my analysis does not support the theory that the Ephesian redaction of the Colossian *Haustafel* is an attempt to substantially alter the orientation of the code, either in a more egalitarian direction or a more conventional direction. Neither code reflects a conventional slave/master relationship, and both contain surprisingly egalitarian content.

[3] See Section 2.1 above.

Nevertheless, despite establishing a degree of continuity, my findings do not prove that there is no discernable trajectory from Colossians to Ephesians. On the contrary, my analysis suggests that Eph 6:9 is more countercultural than Col 4:1. The notion that a master should treat his slave as an equal is occasionally found in Jewish and Greco-Roman literature, but the notion that a master should serve his slave appears to be a distinctively Christian idea.[4] My analysis is thus compatible with Ben Witherington's conclusion that the Ephesian *Haustafel* offers a stronger statement of the behavior that is expected of Christian householders.[5]

8.2.2. The Sources which Influenced the Haustafeln[6]

While the authors of the *Haustafeln* were no doubt influenced by contemporary notions of proper household relations, my findings suggest that the *Haustafeln* are genuinely Christian compositions. These codes cannot be described as imports from the surrounding culture that are only superficially Christianized. When it comes to the relationship between slaves and masters, the authors of the *Haustafeln* have not simply reproduced the instructions that we find in the Jewish and Greco-Roman discussions of household management. Instead, the authors have composed unique commands which reflect the tension between the Christian ideals of equality and mutuality and the practical realities of the slave/master hierarchy. This suggests that the composition of the *Haustafeln* involved serious theological reflection.

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[4] See Sections 4.3.1 and 5.2 above.

[5] Witherington, *Letters to Philemon*, 10–11, 181–96, 282–83, 313–43; Witherington, *Indelible Image*, 2:645–82.

[6] See Section 2.2 above.

8.2.3. The Relationship of the Haustafeln to Cultural Norms[7]

My analysis contradicts the popular view that Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 are merely conventional commands to treat slaves decently. While non-Christian authors occasionally exhort masters to treat slaves with some degree of equality, the open-ended command to grant slaves τὴν ἰσότητα is unique and surprising, and masters were certainly never encouraged to serve or obey their slaves.[8] Furthermore, the paradoxical nature of the commands in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 support the view that the *Haustafeln* implicitly subvert the institution of slavery, even though they do not directly challenge it. To be clear, in claiming that the *Haustafeln* subvert slavery, I am not claiming that the *Haustafeln* inevitably lead to the abolition of slavery. The *Haustafeln* subvert slavery, not by suggesting abolition, but by giving masters commands which are impossible to fully obey within the constraints of the conventional slave/master hierarchy.[9] In discussing Philemon, James Tunstead Burtchaell speaks of "a Gospel that taunts us to make slaves and masters into brothers and sisters" without explaining how this is to be accomplished in the real world. In this Gospel, "The impossible becomes mandatory."[10] We may say the same of the *Haustafeln*. These texts taunt masters to grant slaves equality and to do the same things for the slaves which the slaves do for them. Such commands mandate the impossible and thus provoke the community to completely re-envision the slave/master relationship.

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[7] See Section 2.3 above.

[8] On parallels to Col 4:1, see the discussion in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.4 above.

[9] In response to Richard B. Hays, Wayne A. Meeks asks, "What can it mean for 'conventional authority structures' to be 'subverted even while they are left in place'? Either they are authoritative or they are not" [Meeks, "Haustafeln," 250; citing Hays, *Moral Vision,* 64]. My thesis provides an answer to Meeks. How do the *Haustafeln* subvert the slave/master hierarchy while leaving it in place? By giving masters commands which are impossible to obey within the conventional hierarchy.

[10] Burtchaell, *Philemon's Problem*, 32.

Note that this is precisely what we observe John Chrysostom doing. In his comments on Eph 5:21, which anticipate his later comments on Eph 6:9, Chrysostom gives the following exhortation:

> Let there be an interchange of slavery and submission. For then will there be no such thing as slavery. Let not one sit down in the rank of a freeman, and the other in the rank of a slave; rather it were better that both masters and slaves be slaves to one another; far better to be a slave in this way than free in any other; as will be evident from hence. Suppose the case of a man who should have an hundred slaves, and he should in no way serve them; and suppose again a different case, of an hundred friends, all waiting upon one another. Which will lead the happier life? Which with the greater pleasure, with the more enjoyment? In the one case there is no anger, no provocation, no wrath, nor anything else of the kind whatever; in the other all is fear and apprehension. In the one case too the whole is forced, in the other is of free choice. In the one case they serve one another because they are forced to do so, in the other with mutual gratification. Thus does God will it to be; for this He washed His disciples' feet. (*Hom. Eph.* 19 [62.134.28–43]; cf. *Hom. Eph.* 22 [62.157.19–22])[11]

Though he claims that when master and slave become slaves of one another, "there will be no such thing as slavery," Chrysostom does not seem to be anticipating the legal abolition of slavery.[12] Instead, he envisions a slave/master relationship which has been so radically transformed that it can no longer be rightly described as slavery. A similar vision of Christian slavery is attested in Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory praises his elder sister Macrina for convincing their mother

> to adopt her own standard of humility, persuading her to put herself at the same level [ὁμότιμον] as her company of virgins, so that she shared with them, as equals [κατὰ τὸ

[11] Translation taken with slight modification from *NPNF*[1] 13:142. See the discussion of this passage in Sections 3.2.5 and 5.1.1 above. On Christians washing the feet of their slaves, see Origen *Comm. Jo.* 32.133; Basil *Reg. mor.* 31:856.33–54; Chrys. *Hom. Phlm.* 2.3 [62:712.1–3].

[12] While Chrysostom does not advocate for the legal abolition of slavery, he does in another passage encourage masters to release their slaves, though he permits them by way of concession to retain one or two (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.5 [61:353.42–354.17]). See the discussion of this passage in Section 7.1 above.

> ἴσον], the same table, the same bed and the sundry necessities of life, all differences of rank being set aside. (*Vit. Macr.* 11.7–13)[13]

While perhaps not very common in the early church, this is precisely the sort of behavior that is suggested by the language employed in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9.[14]

What of the wife/husband and child/father relationships? My study has focused on the slave/master relationship, and thus one must be cautious in drawing from my results conclusions concerning these other two relationships. One cannot assume, for example, that an egalitarian twist on the slave/master relationship must be accompanied by an egalitarian twist on the wife/husband relationship.[15] Nevertheless, the commands to masters must be included in any assessment of the overall tenor of the codes. In the *Haustafeln*, husbands are not commanded to rule their wives, but instead to love them. (In the Ephesian *Haustafel*, this love is explicitly modeled on the self-sacrificial love of Christ.) Likewise, fathers are not warned against excessive leniency, but are instead warned against emotionally damaging their children. As a number of

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[13] Translation from Garnsey, *Ideas*, 85. Elsewhere, in a passage which sounds remarkably modern, Gregory actually denounces slavery as an affront to God (*Hom. Eccl.* 4 [5.334.4–338.22]). Nevertheless, as Peter Garnsey observes, "Gregory stops short of urging that the whole institution be done away with, or even instructing his audience to emancipate their own slaves forthwith" [Garnsey, *Ideas*, 84]. For a translation of this passage, see Hall and Moriarty, "Gregory of Nyssa," 73–75. For further discussion, see Maria Mercedès Bergadá, "La condamnation de l'esclavage dans l'Homélie IV," in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies*, ed. Stuart George Hall (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 185–96; Lionel Wickham, "Homily 4," in *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies*, ed. Stuart George Hall (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 177–84, esp. 178–180.

[14] As Garnsey observes, it is difficult to assess the extent to which ordinary masters in the early church "adjusted their behaviour" in response to the Christian doctrine of equality ["Sons, Slaves—and Christians," in *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space*, ed. Beryl Rawson and Paul Weaver (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 101–21, esp. 107–108].

[15] While Philo offers some of the strongest statements preserved in our sources concerning the natural equality of master and slave (see esp. *Spec. Laws* 2.69; *Good Person* 79; *Contempl. Life* 70), he also states that wives "must be in servitude [δουλεύειν] to their husbands" (*Hypothetica* 7.3 [Colson, LCL]).

scholars have emphasized, such sentiments are not entirely unique to the *Haustafeln*, and parallels to both exhortations can be found in the non-Christian literature.[16] However, when these commands to husbands and fathers are set alongside the remarkable commands to masters, the picture that emerges is of a *paterfamilias* who is preoccupied, not with the proper ordering of his estate, but with the wellbeing of the subordinate members of his household. This, combined with the unique structure of parallel commands to both the subordinate and superordinate persons, gives the *Haustafeln* a distinctive humanitarian flavor which sets them apart from most contemporaneous discussions of household management.[17]

8.2.4. The Occasion and Purpose of the Haustafeln[18]

My analysis contradicts the popular theory that the *Haustafeln* were introduced to suppress egalitarian tendencies in the community.[19] An author who intended to suppress equality would certainly not have used the language found in Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9. The fact that the *Haustafeln* were read aloud to the entire community means that slaves would have not only heard the exhortations directed to them; they would also have heard the exhortations directed to their masters.[20] Attempting to restrain slaves who sought a greater equality by publicly

[16] See Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 above.

[17] The closest non-Christian parallel to the *Haustafeln* in this respect is provided by the Jewish sage Pseudo-Phocylides, who exhorts the man to love his wife, to be gentle with his children, and to refrain from cruelty and arrogance towards his slaves (195–227).

[18] See Section 2.4 above.

[19] See Section 2.4.3 above.

[20] The following passage from John Chrysostom illustrates the significance of the obvious fact that slaves heard both sides of the *Haustafel*: "And servants when we tell them that it is written that they should 'obey their masters, and not serve with eye-service,' they also again demand of us what follows, bidding us also give the same advice to masters. For Paul bade them also, they saw, 'to forbear threatening'" (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 26.6 [61:220.32–37]; *NPNF*[1] 12:154). See also the discussion in Hurtado, *Destroyer*, 179–80.

commanding their masters to grant them τὴν ἰσότητα would be like attempting to put out a fire by sprinkling it with gasoline. Far from suppressing equality, the authors of Col 4:1 and Eph 6:9 are evidently attempting to promote equality between master and slave.

My analysis also indicates a substantial continuity between the *Haustafeln* and the epistles in which they appear. While some scholars have argued that the *Haustafeln* are in sharp conflict with the theology expressed in passages such as Col 3:11 and Eph 2:14, my analysis suggests that the authors of the *Haustafeln* took this theology seriously and consciously sought to apply it to the slave/master relationship. Thus my findings are consistent with the view that the *Haustafeln* are intended at least in part to advance the agendas of the epistles in which they appear.[21]

8.2.5. The Relationship of the Haustafeln to Paul[22]

While my study does not assume the Pauline authorship of Colossians or Ephesians, my results do suggest a substantial continuity between Paul and the *Haustafeln* on the issue of slavery. I acknowledge that the *Haustafeln* differ from Philemon in at least one important way: while Philemon can easily be read as a call for manumission, the *Haustafeln* cannot. Nevertheless, as I have argued, the exhortations to masters in the *Haustafeln* reflect an approach to slavery which is remarkably similar to the one found in Philemon. This supports Witherington's contention that the differences which do exist between the *Haustafeln* and Philemon may be explained by differences in rhetorical situation and do not necessarily require the hypothesis of different authors with different theologies.[23]

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[21] See Section 2.4.5 above.

[22] See Section 2.5 above.

[23] Witherington, *Letters to Philemon,* 10–11, 185.

8.3. Bias and Critical Scholarship

In a recent monograph on slavery and biblical scholarship, Hector Avalos accuses "religionist scholars" of covering up the fact that the Bible "accepts, endorses, or promotes slavery."[24] According to Avalos, modern biblical scholarship is "still permeated by a religionist agenda" which seeks to defend the ethical superiority of the Bible.[25] In my investigation of the *Haustafeln*, I have found an egalitarian message which is fundamentally incompatible with conventional conceptions of the slave/master relationship. Since I am a Christian, I recognize that my study is therefore open to the sort of critique that Avalos levels against his colleagues.

There are two points to be made in response. First and foremost, as I am sure Avalos would agree, one cannot invalidate a historical reconstruction simply by identifying the biases of the historian. One must also demonstrate that the historian has been led by these biases to distort the evidence. While I do not deny the presence of my own biases, I have consciously attempted to set them aside and pursue my research as objectively as possible.[26] It will be the responsibility of my critics to show precisely how I have distorted the evidence and to offer a more viable historical reconstruction.[27]

Second, a desire to defend the ethical superiority of the NT is clearly not the only bias present in biblical scholarship. In the introduction to his book, Avalos states, "I believe that

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[24] Avalos, *Slavery*, 38, 288. Similar accusations are made in Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 85, 195–96.

[25] Avalos, *Slavery*, 18. See also Avalos, *Slavery*, 4.

[26] I recognize that pure objectivity is an impossible ideal.

[27] Similar comments are made in Murray Vasser, "Bodies and Souls: The Case for Reading Revelation 18.13 as a Critique of the Slave Trade," *NTS* 64.3 (2018): 397–409, esp. 398–99.

religion is an obstacle to good ethics and general human welfare."[28] He concludes his study with these words:

> The Bible's stance on slavery alone is sufficient to confirm the New Atheism's general stance that this collection of books has been one of the greatest obstacles to human ethical progress in history. The Bible is part of a world whose ethics and values are best left in the past. Accordingly, the modern world must completely unshackle itself from using the Bible as any sort of ethical or social authority.[29]

Though not as openly antagonistic towards religion, J. Albert Harrill expresses similar sentiments in his monograph on slavery in the NT. After concluding that the NT evidences no "moral unease" with slavery, Harrill explains that this conclusion has implications which go beyond the nineteenth-century debate over slavery to "contemporary debates over race relations, military conflict, capital punishment, poverty, abortion, full emancipation of women, and lesbian and gay rights." According to Harrill, all of these debates are shaped by "the opposing values of [biblical] literalism and moral intuition."[30] Since the results of his study indicate that the Bible is a deficient moral guide, Harrill concludes his book by encouraging his readers to cast off the constraints of biblical literalism and seek "a better moral vision."[31]

Clearly, these two scholars see the Bible as supporting a number of social and political positions with which they strongly disagree. Thus they welcome the conclusion that the Bible supports slavery, because in demonstrating the Bible's moral inadequacy, this conclusion opens the door for an ethical vision which is not constrained by the Bible. In short, while biblical scholars obviously have reasons to prefer results which confirm the ethical superiority of the

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[28] Avalos, *Slavery*, 16.

[29] Avalos, *Slavery*, 288.

[30] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 6, 192.

[31] Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 196.

Bible, biblical scholars also have reasons to prefer results which confirm the ethical inferiority of the Bible. Both biases are capable of undermining critical historical analysis.[32]

[32] This point is apparently recognized by Harrill. While they reach similar conclusions concerning the NT and slavery, Harrill is not impressed with Avalos' research. In a scathing review, Harrill states that Avalos' book "reads more like a manifesto of a political ideology than a serious study of historical interpretation" [Review of Hector Avalos, *Slavery, Abolitionism, and the Ethics of Biblical Scholarship*, *BibInt* 21.4–5 (2013): 547–49, esp. 547].

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