The Rhetoric of Gender in the Household of God: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Its Place in Pauline Tradition

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE RHETORIC OF GENDER IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD:

EPHESIANS 5:21-33 AND

ITS PLACE IN PAULINE TRADITION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN THEOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, IL

MAY 2013
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To the Ursuline Sisters of Northeast Ohio,
true sisters and dear companions on the journey
The height to which Love raises us is indescribable.
(1 Clement 49:4)
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ABSTRACT

Around the turn of the first and second centuries CE, various letters were circulated in Paul’s name offering codes of Christian conduct based on traditional Hellenistic Roman mores. One of these letters, the Epistle to the Ephesians, stands out for the way it deliberately rewrites the marital code of Colossians 3:18-19, a letter purportedly from Paul, and adds to the more conventional injunction on wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 an insistence on the mutual subordination of married partners. This idea of mutual marital subordination makes the household code of Ephesians unusual for its time, in contrast to more conventional Hellenistic Roman household ethics found in both Christian and non-Christian literature of the period. In fact, that Ephesians’ corrections to Colossians 3:18-19 become problematic is evidenced by later scribes who modify the Epistle to conform to Colossians. Because Ephesians has been interpreted and translated in the light of Colossians and later scribal modifications, its challenge to conventional household ethics of its time has gone unnoticed, and scholars have overlooked the witness it gives to the variability in early Christian views on what was considered proper gender relations and roles. This dissertation uncovers the freshness and originality of the author of Ephesians and illuminates forms of resistance within Pauline Christianity to more traditional Hellenistic Roman mores, arguing that, at least in regard to Christian gender relations, Ephesians belongs to a separate trajectory of Pauline tradition intentionally distinct from Colossians and other pseudonymous letters of Paul.
CHAPTER ONE
THE STATUS QUAESTIONIS

Introduction

Around the turn of the first and second centuries CE, various letters circulated in Paul’s name offering, among other things, codes of Christian conduct based on traditional Hellenistic Roman mores. One of these letters, the Epistle to the Ephesians, stands out for the way it deliberately rewrites the household code of Colossians, a letter also purportedly from Paul, and adds to the more conventional injunction on wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 an insistence on the mutual subordination of married partners. This idea of mutual marital subordination makes the household code of Ephesians unusual for its time, in contrast to more conventional Hellenistic Roman household ethics found in both Christian and non-Christian literature of the period. In fact, that Ephesians’ changes to Col. 3:18 become problematic is evidenced by later manuscripts with scribal emendations modifying the epistle to conform more to Colossians. Because Ephesians has been interpreted and translated in the light of Colossians and these later scribal modifications, its challenge to conventional household ethics of its time has been little noticed, and scholars have overlooked the witness it gives to the variability in early Christian views on what was considered proper gender relations and roles.

Using the methodologies of modern biblical scholarship (textual and redaction criticism, as well as historical, literary, and source criticism), this investigation explores
in what ways the author of Ephesians redacts the marital code of Colossians and the significance of these redactions. That is to ask, are the more mutual relationships envisioned by the author of this epistle to be seen as a resistance to the instructions given in Col. 3:18, and if so, how? We will likewise explore in what sense, at least in regard to Christian gender relations, the rewritten marital code of Eph. 5:21-33 can be viewed as being in continuity with or in contrast to the authentic letters of Paul, commonly agreed to be a major source for Ephesians.

**Summary of Scholarship and Description of the Problem to be Addressed**

To answer these questions, we will look at Pauline tradition as a major source for the marital code of Ephesians, both as it is filtered through Colossians and as it is passed on through Paul’s undisputed letters. To be sure, the search for the sources of New Testament household codes, such as those found in Colossians and Ephesians, has been a major undertaking of New Testament scholarship in the last century, although the focus of scholarly research has been on sources in Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish literature. T.K. Abbott, for example, was among the first modern scholars to notice parallels between the household codes of Colossians and Ephesians and Hellenistic Roman literature, noting especially their similarities with Plutarch’s counsels to newly married couples.1 Following upon Abbott, Martin Dibelius and his student Karl Weidinger observed the similarity in form and content between the household codes of Colossians and Ephesians and popularized discussions of Stoic ethics, such as those

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described in the works of Seneca and Epictetus. Contra Dibelius and Weidinger, other scholars such as Karl H. Rengstorf and L. Goppelt argued that the New Testament household codes are a uniquely Christian creation, inspired from the family life of Jesus described in Luke’s opening chapters. Ernst Lohmeyer, on the other hand, focusing on the household code of Colossians, proposed Jewish custom as the origin for the New Testament household codes, while J. Paul Sampley explored Old Testament and Hellenistic Jewish traditions in Ephesians. Others have focused more specifically on the Hellenistic Jewish traditions behind New Testament household codes, such as James Crouch, W. Schrage, and Eduard Schweizer. David L. Balch, however, in his research on the household code of 1 Peter, has gone beyond Hellenistic Jewish traditions as sources for New Testament household ethics. Persuasively demonstrating the importance of household management in antiquity from Aristotle to Augustus, Balch notes significant parallels between the domestic code of Arius Didymus (the Stoic philosopher and teacher of Augustus and a major source for Augustus’ empire-wide moral reform)


3 K.H. Rengstorf, "Die neutestamentlichen Mahnungen an die Frau, sich dem Manne unterzuordnen," in *Verbum Dei manet in Aeternum* (Festschrift D. Otto Schmitz; ed. W. Foerster; Witten: Luther Verlag, 1953), 131-145; L. Goppelt, "Jesus und die 'Haustafel'-Tradition," *Orientierung an Jesus* (ed. P. Hoffmann; Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 93-106. Rengstorf and Goppelt are only very briefly mentioned here since there is no real evidence to suggest that Jesus’ early family life, as described in Luke’s opening chapters, was at all in the mind of New Testament writers as they composed what they believed to be ideal Christian household relations.

and the New Testament household codes, particularly that found in 1 Peter. Following upon Balch’s work, David C. Verner has investigated the social world of the Hellenistic-Roman household in his study of the household codes found in the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus). Of course, we must hasten to add that there is no real conflict here between those who argue for the Jewish origins of the New Testament household codes and those who argue for Hellenistic Roman sources, since, as Martin Hengel has convincingly established, the Judaism of the late Second Temple period was Hellenistic Judaism, in other words, not at all untouched by or isolated from Hellenistic Roman sensibilities.

While there has been much good source-critical work exploring the non-Christian origins and sources of New Testament household codes, what has not yet been done is a close study of the household code of Ephesians, specifically the marital code of Eph. 5:21-33, and its adaptation of sources found in the undisputed epistles of Paul and Colossians (which, like Ephesians, is also a disputed letter of Paul). In fact, it is astonishing that no full-scale study has been done on the Pauline sources used in Ephesians’ marital code and how those sources have been adapted by the author. Such an

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investigation becomes useful to understand in what ways the household code of Ephesians incorporates and develops Pauline teaching. Thus far, only a few scholars, Michael Gese, Gerhard Sellin, and Eberhard Faust, have done any kind of source-critical analysis of Ephesians’ use of Pauline traditions, though none of these focuses in any detailed way specifically on Ephesians’ use of Pauline teaching on conjugal relations and gender roles for its household code. In his own examination of Ephesians 5:21-33, Gregory Dawes draws attention to the need for just such an investigation of Paul’s influence upon Ephesians’ household code, suggesting that such a study would be “an extremely useful line of enquiry.” In short, beyond Hellenistic Jewish or Hellenistic Roman origins for the domestic code of Ephesians 5:21-33, a somewhat different debate regarding sources now incites our interest, and that is, in what way is Ephesians’ marital code in continuity with or in opposition to its sources within Pauline tradition and, in particular, Paul’s own teaching on gender relations in his undisputed letters?

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8 Michael Gese, *Das Vermächtnis des Apostels: Die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie im Epheserbrief* (WUNT 99; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Gerhard Sellin, *Studien zu Paulus und Zum Epheserbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009); Eberhard Faust, *Pax Christi et Pax Caesaris: religionsgeschichtliche, traditions- geschichtliche und sozialgeschichtliche Studien zum Epheserbrief* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruphant, 1993). Although the focus of Faust’s study is on Ephesians 2, the usefulness of his work for our investigation of Ephesians 5 is his use of Roman imperial ideology to set up an interpretive framework through which to read the epistle.

9 Gese, for example, makes only a few scattered references to the Haustafel throughout his book, while Sellin only briefly mentions the Haustafel in short paragraphs on three pages (176, 196, 240), and Faust examines historical-critically the Pauline traditions behind Ephesians 2:11-22.


11 Before going further, one caveat is in order. For a number of compelling reasons beyond the scope of this study, the disputed letters of Paul (besides Colossians and Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians and the Pastoral Epistles, i.e., 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) are thought by a majority of scholars to imply a church setting which postdates the time of Paul by at least one generation, as in the case of Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians, and perhaps more as in the case of the Pastorals, generally believed to reflect an early second century church context. Consequently, when studying Paul as a source for Ephesians’ household
To be sure, a close study of the undisputed letters of Paul reveals a man who benefited from and encouraged women’s leadership roles in his Christian communities in ways that were not, in any obvious way, subordinate to men. In fact, Paul’s teaching on marital relations is notable for its emphasis on conjugal mutuality and its absence of any demand of a wife’s subordination to her husband. That women’s roles, especially those roles vis à vis men in Pauline Christianity, became a source of tension after Paul’s death is evident from the epistles circulated in his name that seek to conform the roles and behavior of women to more traditional Hellenistic-Roman gender hierarchies.

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12 See the discussion of Paul’s views on women as seen in his undisputed correspondence in Chapter Five below. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: a Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 205-236; Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Reading Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters of Paul," in Women and Christian Origins (eds. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 199-220; Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald with Janet H.Tulloch, A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 26-35; Wendy Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles in Paul's Church: Countercultural or Conventional?," Novum Testamentum 36, 04 (1994): 350-372. In general, these scholars presume that there is enough evidence to suggest that the problematic passage of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is an interpolation by a later scribe, rather than originating with Paul himself. See note 14 below.

13 These would be Colossians, generally believed to be written a generation after Paul, and the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus), attributed to Paul but generally considered to be more reflective of concerns of the early second century Church than of the mid-first century. (See note 11 above.) For a helpful discussion of how these texts reflect the changed status of women in the early Church, see Joseph F. Kelly, The World of the Early Christians (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1997), 150. See also
Furthermore, some evidence suggests that one of Paul’s original letters was altered by a later scribe who inserted an interpolation which would delimit women’s roles to conform to local custom and more traditional expectations (1 Cor. 14:34-35).\textsuperscript{14}

In contrast to what appears to be Paul’s own practice, the household codes of Col. 3:18-19, the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), and 1 Peter 3:16 offer clear examples of Christian conformity with the conventional gender hierarchies found in Hellenistic Judaism and the Greco-Roman world at large. Unlike these other New Testament epistles, however, the Epistle to the Ephesians is much more carefully nuanced and, as will be shown, instead of merely echoing Colossians’ traditional command of wifely subordination, rewrites the household code of Colossians 3:18-19 in some noteworthy ways by insisting on mutual subordination and elaborating upon the command in Colossians 3:19 for husbands to love their wives. This suggests significant differences in outlook and practice from the Pauline communities represented by Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles.\textsuperscript{15} We must ask why is it, then, that Ephesians, which

\textsuperscript{14} For a number of reasons which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five below, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is thought by many scholars to be material not original to Paul. For one thing, it breaks the flow of Paul’s argument in the passage, and its deletion allows for a smoother reading. For another, early manuscripts are in disagreement regarding its placement. For a helpful review of the arguments and scholarly debate on this pericope, see Robert W. Allison, "Let Women Be Silent in the Churches (1 Cor 14:33b-36): What Did Paul Really Say and What Did It Mean?," JSNT 32 (F 1988): 27-60. See also the work by Philip B. Payne, “MS. 88 as Evidence for a Text without 1 Corinthians 14:34-35,” NTS 44 (1998): 152-158.

claims Pauline authority and authorship along with Colossians and later the Pastoral Epistles, does not echo their own affirmation of traditional Greco-Roman gender mores? In other words, how does Ephesians make use of undisputed Pauline tradition for its own household code and why, at least in regard to idealized Christian gender relations, is Ephesians so notably different, in ways both significant and subtle, from other New Testament epistles which likewise claim their origin in Paul?

This question is more complicated than it initially appears for three basic reasons: a) the traditional presumption of Pauline authorship for all the Deutero-Pauline epistles; b) some manuscript traditions which conform the original text of Ephesians 5:21-22 to Colossians 3:18 (as we will see in Chapter Three, “An Exegetical Study of Ephesians 5:21-24”); and c) Ephesians’ problematic hermeneutical history (to be discussed in Chapter Six, “Ephesians 5:21-33 and Its Place in Pauline Tradition: Summary and Conclusions”). These reasons are not unrelated. The presumption of Pauline authorship colors how Ephesians is read, interpreted, and copied in the light of other epistles for which Paul is the presumed author. A later copyist, presuming the same author (Paul) for both Ephesians and Colossians, will take liberties with the text before him in order to conform it to the text he knows from Col. 3:18 so as to “clarify” what he presumes to be Paul’s intent. This was not at all an uncommon practice in antiquity and, as we shall see in Chapter Two, the author of Ephesians took similar liberties when borrowing, adapting, and changing material from Colossians. Similarly, Christian communities outside of the original audience for whom Ephesians was written will likewise read the epistle and interpret it in the light of Colossians and, later on, the Pastorals. In this way, the voice
and message of the author of Ephesians, who, as we will see below, is not to be confused with Paul himself, become blurred and indistinct from the voice and message of both Colossians and the second century CE Pastoral Epistles. In other words, Ephesians has been read in a way which confuses it with other Deutero-Pauline letters. And, while some work has been done to isolate the authentic voice of Paul from that of a later copyist (as in the case of 1 Cor. 14:34-35), very little has been done to make more audible and distinct in its own right the voice of the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Perhaps for this reason the household code of Ephesians continues to generate no small amount of scholarly debate and discussion. On one side of the debate is an array of scholars such as Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Ian McFarland, Andrew Lincoln, Thorsten Moritz, and J. Paul Sampley who maintain that Ephesians perpetuates Christian patriarchal subordination of women to men. Schüssler Fiorenza goes so far as to charge that Ephesians is a betrayal of Paul’s freedom in regard to gender issues and roles of women. Following Schüssler Fiorenza, Elizabeth Johnson claims that the author of Ephesians “contradict[s]—not simply reinterpret[s]—Paul’s understanding of relations

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17 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. While acknowledging that Ephesians’ “modifies the patriarchal code by replacing patriarchal superordination and domination with the Christian command of love to be lived according to the example of Christ,” Schüssler Fiorenza nonetheless insists that “on the whole, however, the author was not able to ‘Christianize’ the code. The ‘gospel of peace’ has transformed the relationship of Gentiles and Jews, but not the social roles of wives and slaves within the household of God. On the contrary, the cultural-social structures of domination are theologized and thereby reinforced” (270). For Schüssler Fiorenza, the Haustafel of Ephesians is thus in stark contrast to what she describes as a “discipleship of equals” in the earliest Jesus movement and Pauline Christianity.
between women and men.\textsuperscript{18} On the other side are scholars such as Gerhard Sellin, Chantal Reynier, John Muddiman, Gregory Dawes, Eberhard Hahn, Markus Barth, among others who, while acknowledging the hierarchical structure of Ephesians’ household code, nonetheless also insist on its countercultural message.\textsuperscript{19} Still others, such as Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald, have at different times taken different positions. More recently, Osiek and MacDonald’s co-authored work on women in early Christian household churches acknowledges some of the more countercultural elements in the epistle while admitting its problematic history of interpretation.\textsuperscript{20}

Adding to the discussion on Ephesians’ domestic code are commentators such as Peter O’Brien who, holding to Pauline authorship and thus with no need to consider the


\textsuperscript{20} In a 2002 essay, Osiek describes a number of interpretative issues with Ephesians 5:22-33, including what she considers to be the problematic metaphor of the church as bride of Christ: “casting the church as feminine, and above all as bride of Christ, far from enhancing the dignity of women, has in fact done harm to the perception of the capacity of women to image the divine, and thus of women's fundamental human and Christian dignity. It does no good to affirm the full dignity and equality of women with men if our language, our imagery, and our metaphors continue to perpetuate inequality.” See "The Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33): A Problematic Wedding," \textit{BTB} 32, 1 (Spring 2002): 39. Similarly, Margaret Y. MacDonald describes the household code of Ephesians as “an important step in the patriarchalization of Pauline communities” and that Ephesians demonstrates that in the post-Pauline church “power is being placed more firmly in the hands of household rulers.” See MacDonald’s \textit{The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 120. On the other hand, in the conclusion of chapter six of \textit{A Woman’s Place}, Osiek and MacDonald admit some potentially more countercultural elements in Ephesians 5:22-33 (“Both Conventional and Countercultural,” 141-143). On the whole, what Osiek and MacDonald describe as “countercultural” in Ephesians’ household code is not at all convincing, and their presentation of Ephesians 5:22-33 as a “political strategy of resistance to the dominant social order,” while correct, is incomplete and, in my view, fails to appreciate fully the author’s subtle corrective to Greco-Roman convention.
textual history of Ephesians 5:21-33 (or the later hermeneutical confusion when it becomes read alongside Colossians and the Pastorals as a genuinely Pauline letter), goes so far as to affirm a patriarchal reading of the text as inspired and intended by God for married couples.21

Hence, given Ephesians’ problematic hermeneutical history that extends even to our own day, it is not difficult to understand why a number of scholars follow Schüssler Fiorenza and Johnson’s view of Ephesians as a “betrayal” of Paul’s earlier freedom accorded to women’s roles, especially those roles vis à vis men. That being said, however, the argument presented here will be that, on the contrary, the household code of Ephesians is, instead, a smoothly stated yet countercultural development in continuity with the authentic teaching of Paul, and part of a distinct trajectory of Pauline Christianity intentionally different from Colossians and from what later develops into the Pastoral Epistles. The aim of this study, therefore, is to explore in what ways Ephesians 5:21-33 and its emendation and elaboration of the domestic code of Colossians 3:18-19 can be understood to be in continuity with or in opposition to genuine Pauline tradition. Or, to put it another way, the goal here is to investigate how, specifically in regard to its marital code, the Epistle to the Ephesians incorporates and adapts Pauline tradition to suit the needs of its originally intended audience.

Methodological Issues

Noted Ephesians scholar Pheme Perkins has observed that for those who take the

21 Peter T. O'Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 408.
majority position that Ephesians is written not by Paul but by a pseudonymous author
(the position also taken here), there are two possible approaches to understanding the
epistle’s theological message. The first approach regards it as a *sui generis* example of
early Christian theology. The second approach examines how the author of Ephesians
redacts traditions inherited from Paul by altering and developing them. This second
approach will be adopted here, first of all, because the epistle itself claims to be a letter
from Paul (1:1) and makes explicit mention of other Pauline letters available to its
readers, perhaps even a collection of such letters (3:3-4). In any case, Paul’s undisputed
letters are an obvious source for the author’s own composition. Secondly, as is widely
recognized, Ephesians borrows heavily from Colossians, another letter which claims
Pauline authorship. Ephesians is not, then, a *sui generis* work of early Christian
literature, such as Hebrews or Revelation. Instead, it makes a claim to fit squarely within
Pauline tradition so as to be accepted as such. For this reason, it is important to examine
those allusions and references to the undisputed letters of Paul and Colossians which are
pertinent to gender relations and proper roles for women and men. Of course, most
germane to our study is a thorough redactional analysis of Ephesians 5:21-33 and its
appropriation of Colossian 3:18-19, highlighting the expansions, elaborations, deletions,

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22 See the discussion below on pseudonymous letters as a popular and commonly used genre from
the first century CE on.

points to Andreas Lindemann (*Die Aufhebung der Zeit: Geschichtsverständnis und Eschatologie im
Epheserbrief* [Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1975]) as an example of the former, and to Michael Gese (*Das
Vermächtnis des Apostels*) as an example of the latter.

24 See the discussion in Chapter Five on the author’s knowledge of all of Paul’s undisputed letters.

25 This will become clear in the discussion of the relationship between Colossians and Ephesians
in Chapter Two.
and special emphases of the author of Ephesians in such a way as to reveal the author’s own contribution and thought. In other words, what the author retains from Colossians’ household code is significant, yet equally significant is what the author changes and deletes—this will give us some insight into how the author thinks and in what way the author makes use of the traditions inherited from Paul.

Specifically, then, after some brief observations on the epistle as a whole in the light of its first century CE Hellenistic Roman milieu and the purpose for which it was written (see below), we will then examine closely the relationship between the household codes of Col. 3:18-4:1 and Eph. 5:21-6:9 (Chapter Two). This requires a redactional analysis of Eph. 5:15-6:9/Col. 3:16-4:5 and the discussion of a side-by-side synoptic study of the household code of each epistle for the sake of comparison and contrast (Appendix A). This task, however, requires that we establish the precise text from Ephesians upon which to focus. This involves two elements, the first being to set the parameters of our text and to offer a rationale for them, and the second, to establish the most reliable text for our examination. In the first place, there is no small amount of debate about where the household code of Ephesians actually begins, whether with 5:21 or 5:22. Chapter Two (“The Relationship between Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19”) will offer a summary of this debate and give reasons for choosing to begin with verse 21 as opposed to verse 22. Once we have set the text, we can discuss its resemblance, especially in regard to form, to contemporaneous Hellenistic Roman codes of conduct. This discussion on the form of Eph. 5:21-33 will shed further light on the
difficulties involved when separating the marital code of Ephesians from what comes before it.

Following the redactional analysis and the form critical analysis in Chapter Two, we will then discuss the overall structure of the entire passage in Chapter Three, noting the author’s rhetorical moves, step-by-step arguments, and particular stressed points and emphases by the way the author arranges material. This leads naturally into a more detailed exegetical study of the text of Eph. 5:21-33. Because of the length of the passage, the exegetical study is divided between Chapters Three (Eph. 5:21-24) and Four (Eph. 5:25-33) where all the pertinent elements of our passage, including key words, grammar, syntax, and meaning in the light of contemporary literature, both Hellenistic Roman and Hellenistic Jewish, are examined in detail verse by verse. In addition, Chapter Three will offer a textual analysis of Eph. 5:21-22, examining textual variants and problematic translations, both ancient and modern. Further, both Chapters Three and Four offer discussions on how the author borrows and adapts words and concepts from Paul’s genuine letters and Colossians, at times retaining their original meaning, other times not. All this will be done in order to understand the author’s own meaning as well as how the author makes use of sources inherited from Paul, both Paul’s undisputed letters as well as the post-Pauline material in Colossians.

In what sense, however, is the author’s teaching on mutual marital subordination based on genuine Pauline tradition and in what sense might it be the author’s own adaptation of sources inherited from Paul? Given the common practice in antiquity of scribal emendations and interpolations, this question is not as straightforward as it might
appear, and so Chapter Five (“Paul’s Views on Subordination, Marriage, and Gender Relations in His Undisputed Letters”) offers a careful analysis of Paul’s own views on issues regarding women and gender roles in his communities, as seen in those passages in his undisputed correspondence which touch upon what the apostle himself has to say about the proper roles of women in his churches, wifely subordination, marriage, and gender relations.

Finally, in Chapter Six (“Ephesians 5:21-33 and Its Place in Pauline Tradition: Summary and Conclusions”) we return to the question regarding the author’s use and adaptation of sources inherited from Paul. Here we will also look at the hermeneutical Nachleben of the epistle and the confusion that ensues when it becomes interpreted in the light of the later interpolations to Paul’s genuine correspondence (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:34-35) and the more traditional teachings found in the household codes of Colossians and the Pastorals. We will likewise explore what this epistle suggests about the variability in the way marriage partnerships were regarded in the early Church. We will then offer reasons to explain the differences between the views of the author of Ephesians and the separate trajectory of Pauline tradition seen in Colossians and the Pastorals. All this will be done to understand in what way Eph. 5:21-33, with its carefully stated insistence on mutuality in a Christian partnership, makes use of and adapts traditions inherited from Paul.

Questions on Authorship, Date, Genre, Setting, Audience, and Purpose

Authorship

Questions regarding authorship, date, genre, audience, setting, and purpose are all interrelated. If the supposed author is truly Paul, then this document is what it purports to
be, namely, a letter to Gentile converts in a Pauline Christian community (or communities) sometime prior to Paul’s death in the middle 60s CE. However, if the true author is not Paul, then this is no longer a genuine letter—so then, what exactly is it? Why was it written and when? To settle even one of these questions determines an answer to those remaining.

The supposed author, of course, is Paul (1:1; 3:1), a Paul who, unlike the Paul of the undisputed letters, does not know anyone in his audience directly and has only “heard” of their “faith and love for all the saints” (1:15). He is both “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (1:1a),²⁶ and a prisoner for their sake (the Gentiles’) (3:1b)—a prisoner “in the Lord” (4:1) and an “ambassador in chains” (6:20). Just as Paul has heard of them, they, too, have only heard of him, or more specifically, they have “surely heard of the commission of God’s grace” given to Paul for their benefit (3:2), the “mystery of Christ made known” to him “by revelation,” about which he has previously written and which they can still read for themselves to understand his thinking (3:3-4). No specific letter is mentioned, but this reference to Paul’s earlier letters implies that both author and audience of this epistle already have access to them, perhaps in some sort of collection.

What is worth pointing out is that the Paul of Ephesians, who calls himself an “apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” at the beginning of the epistle, is one among other “holy apostles and prophets” who are the recipients of the revelation of “the mystery of Christ.” In other words, the controversial Paul of the undisputed letters has become mainstream, and not only that, he even reckons himself among “the holy apostles

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²⁶ The introductory formula at the beginning of the epistle copies that of 2 Cor. 1:1 and Colossians 1:1: Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ.
and prophets,” co-recipients with him of the revelation of the “mystery of Christ.” What a huge shift this is away from the defensive, irascible Paul of the undisputed letters, persecuted by the Judaizers and with few friends or defenders, a Paul on the fringe of a nascent Christ-confessing Judaism with his passionate insistence on Gentile inclusion without the requirements of circumcision or dietary laws. Instead of the old Paul, a different, even-tempered, tranquil, and serene Paul emerges in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Gone now are Paul’s repeated need to defend his apostolic credentials, his gospel without Torah, or his Gentile outreach; his old conflicts and anti-Judaizing polemics have entirely evaporated. Now there remains only Christ’s accomplishment of peace and reconciliation between both Jewish and Gentile Christians (2:14-16) and a peaceful openness to new Gentile neophytes as “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (2:19). A changed and somehow more placid Paul emerges in this epistle, one unknown to us from his undisputed letters, a Paul with no need to justify himself, his gospel, or his divine appointment. Indeed, his audience already has heard of this appointment and are in no need whatsoever of being convinced of it. On the contrary, the image of Paul that appears in this letter is that of a well-known and venerable hero (“for surely you have heard of me…”), a type of persecuted yet serene sage “imprisoned on account of the Gentiles,” who, without any trace of bitterness, exhorts and encourages these Gentile converts to consider themselves equal members and coheirs with Jewish members (3:6). In fact, unlike Paul’s undisputed letters (and even Colossians), there is no conflict in this letter whatsoever, simply a homily combined with the protrepsis and paraenesis so typical of moral philosophers of the time.
In short, the portrait of Paul offered in this letter differs from that of Paul’s undisputed letters: he knows none of his audience personally; he counts himself among the “holy apostles and prophets” upon whom the Church is founded (2:20); there is no conflict or anti-Judaizing polemic; in fact, his antinomian Gospel has become so mainstream as to be entirely acceptable, as if there never had been any difficulty with it in the first place. Indeed, Paul’s former need for self-defense has totally vanished, replaced now with the certainty of Christ’s accomplishment in establishing peace between Gentile and Jew. We cannot help but ask . . . since this Paul is so different from the one we know from the undisputed letters, is this author really Paul?

The text offers us yet other clues which hint that the real author is not Paul, despite all the claims to the contrary. In regard to language, style, and vocabulary, this epistle is unlike any epistle reputedly from Paul, whether genuine or contested, or any other text in the New Testament for that matter. Paul’s own repeated choice of vocabulary, i.e., “justification”\textsuperscript{27} is not to be found in this letter. Instead, idiosyncratic substitutes, i.e., χάριτι ἐστε σεσῳσμένοι, “by grace you have been saved,” 2:5,8) or εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης . . . αὐτοῦ, “in praise of his glory” (1:6,12), are used to convey more typically Pauline expressions. There are some significant theological differences as well: an emphasis on a realized eschatology (no mention at all of a \textit{parousia}); a developed high Christology with entirely cosmological dimensions replacing the Christology of the undisputed letters with their emphasis on the Jesus who died and rose from the dead; a developed ecclesiology which views the Church entirely on the macro level as a universal

\textsuperscript{27} δικαίωσις (Romans 4:25, 5:18); δικαιόω: Romans (14x: 2:13; 3:4,20,24,26,28,30; 4:2,5; 5:1,9; 6:7; 8:30,33); 1 Corinthians (2x: 4:4; 6:11); Galatians (5x: 2:16f; 3:8,11,24; 5:4).
entity, rather than as predominantly micro-scale entities (i.e., “churches,” the small Christian communities, typically household churches, addressed by Paul’s uncontested correspondence).

Much more can be said about the differences between this document and the genuine letters of Paul; it is beyond the scope of this study to detail all the evidence suggesting that Paul is not the real author of this epistle. Further, scholarship of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has already grappled with issues related to the authorship of Ephesians. The majority opinion, followed here, is that Ephesians is not written by Paul but by someone who was thoroughly acquainted with Paul’s (undisputed) letters and Colossians, someone who knew well the mind of Paul.28

The real author of Ephesians, writing so glowingly of “a spirit of wisdom and revelation” (1:17), likely was a Christian teacher29 him or herself,30 one among those

28 There is no real need to rehash a debate that was settled some time ago. Summarizing the scholarly debate on this issue, Rudolf Schnackenburg lists a number of compelling reasons against Pauline authorship in addition to those discussed. See his commentary, Ephesians (trans. Helen Heron; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 24-29. See also Lincoln, Ephesians, lx-lxxiii. For a recent well-articulated, extended, and thoughtful (yet ultimately unconvincing) description of the minority opinion, see Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 2-61.

29 Michael Gese believes the author was a Christian prophet. See Das Vermächtnis des Apostels, 247.

30 While we are not accustomed to thinking that an author of a New Testament text may have been a woman, we have no more evidence to suggest that this text was written by a man than we do a woman. In fact, there is plenty of evidence for women writers in antiquity, including the imperial period, even if they were in far fewer numbers than men. (Juvenal, for example, writes about how embarrassing it is to have an educated, literate woman as a wife. See Satire 6.434-456). Further, the New Testament and early Christian literature speak in numerous places regarding women prophets (Lk. 2:36; Acts 2:17, 21:9; Rev. 2:20; Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. 5.7). Thus a woman prophet is as plausibly the author of this text as is a male prophet. The author’s willingness to replace the imperative verb of Col. 3:18, “be subordinate,” directed only at wives, with a masculine plural participle in 5:21 which grammatically includes husbands, coupled with the astonishing three-fold imperative of husbands to love their wives (5:25, 28, 33), makes a woman author an even more reasonable consideration, and arguably no more speculative than our culturally-influenced, all-too-quick presumptions of male authorship. Compare Eph. 5:25, 28, 33, for example, to 1 Clement 1:3 and Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians 4:2 where wives are instructed to love their husbands
listed as “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers” (4:11). Despite the opening address “to the saints who are in Ephesus” (not present in the earliest manuscripts), the epistle is too broad in scope to be directed to any specific Christian community, but is nonetheless written in such a way as to call to mind Paul’s ongoing presence with the growing Church, now being formed by the same “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers” who themselves were formed and commissioned, either by Paul himself, or by the heirs and beneficiaries of Paul’s own missionary activities.

It is generally presumed that the author is, like Paul, a Hellenistic-Jewish Christian. To begin with, the author addresses a Gentile audience in a way that suggests the author is of Jewish origin (Eph. 2:11; 3:1,6,8; 4:17). Clearly, the multiple allusions and references to the LXX indicate an author who was without doubt well-versed in the Jewish scriptures. The author likewise seems acquainted with a Hellenistic Jewish writing

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31 Lincoln offers the following reasons for presuming that the author is a “Jewish Christian admirer of Paul”: the way the author refers to the “politeia of Israel”; the author’s use of the OT and familiarity with Jewish traditions, including those of the Hellenistic synagogue; and the author’s style of Hebraisms. See Ephesians, lxx. To this list of reasons for the author’s Jewish background, Margaret Y. MacDonald adds the many parallels between Ephesians and the Qumran library. See Margaret Y. MacDonald, Colossians and Ephesians (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2000), 16. However, both C. Leslie Mitton and Andreas Lindemann believe the author was born a Gentile. See C. Leslie Mitton, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 1951: 264; Andreas Lindemann, "Bemerkungen zu den Adressaten und zum Anlass des Epheserbriefes," Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche 67 (1976): 247.
such as the *Letter of Aristeas.* Thus, from all appearances, this author was a Christ-believing Hellenistic Jew of Asia Minor who was well-trained in Greek composition and who could skillfully blend the liturgical language of the synagogue with the paraenetical ethical exhortations of the Greco-Roman philosopher and sage. This author was also a scholar who, as we will see, creatively synthesized and adapted sources from the LXX, Paul’s letters, and Hellenistic Jewish literature.

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32 It is commonly thought that the *Letter of Aristeas* with its reference to the wall that “hems” in Jews from the Gentile world is likely in the background in Ephesians 2:14. See Joachim Gnilka, *Der Epheserbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 140; Lincoln, 141.


The use of the term “Christian” in this dissertation must therefore be carefully nuanced in such a way as to acknowledge the blurry divisions between the early Christian movement and the first century CE Judaism from which it is derived. The term “Christian” in this dissertation is not therefore used in juxtaposition to “Jewish.” To make this point clear, Tellbe’s own term, “Christ-believer” is here used as a synonym for “Christian.”
Date

As Margaret MacDonald has observed, “the perspective of Ephesians is of a ‘built-up’ church looking back to its origins (2:19-20),” while Paul is presented as a major founding hero, in much the same way as various contemporaneous philosophical movements regarded their own founding sages. As we have already seen, the figure of Paul is presented in reverential and idealized tones in Ephesians, and gone are all the controversies and conflicts associated with Paul’s missionary activities. Likewise gone is Paul’s usual insistence that his apostolic authority and message be accepted as genuine. Here we have an atypically placid Paul, imprisoned because of his Gentile missions yet confident that his Gentile audience will accept the truth of his message simply because his claim to be God’s agent is now well-known and respected. Clearly, then, some years would need to elapse before Paul, initially so controversial in the growing Christian movement, could become idealized and viewed as mainstream, and so it is thus generally believed that this epistle was written some years, perhaps even decades, after Paul’s death. Ephesians’ known dependence on Colossians gives us the terminus post quem, while the dependence of Ignatius (d. between 108 – 117 CE) on Ephesians gives us the terminus ante quem. Thus, the usual date put forward for this epistle is in the final years of the first century CE (sometime during the reign of Domitian, 81-96 CE).

34 MacDonald, Colossians and Ephesians, 18.

35 Various dates are offered for Colossians. If an authentic letter from Paul, then likely dates for it would be 54-56 from Ephesus or, if by Timothy while Paul was still alive or had just died, then 61-64 from Rome. If pseudonymous, then the date proposed by a majority of scholars would be the 80’s CE. See Raymond Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 600.

36 Ignatius’ Letter to Polycarp (5:1), in its brief summary of the ethical exhortations of Ephesians 5 in general, has a clear allusion to Eph. 5:25. Likewise, Ignatius’ Letter to the Philadelphians (4:3) alludes to
Genre

If this is not a letter from Paul, then what exactly is it? And for whom? This brings us to questions of genre and audience. A literary genre which became quite popular and common in the first century CE and later into the imperial period was that of epistolary fiction, which took several forms, either as an “embedded letter” within another literary work, or as an epistolary novel, or a pseudonymous letter (i.e., a letter ascribed to someone else, usually long dead), or even “pseudonymous collections” (i.e., a narrative story told through an exchange of letters). Many pseudonymous letters have survived from antiquity. Originally these were misunderstood by scholars from the early modern period and after who dismissed them as “forgeries,” but more recently, scholars have come to view the pseudonymous letter as a literary genre in its own right. In her research on pseudonymous letters in the Hellenistic Roman period, Patricia A. Rosenmeyer observes that such letters may contain original material or be based on genuine correspondence no longer extant. While admitting that pseudonomoi (pseudonymous letters) are in a separate category from epistolary novels, Rosenmeyer

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Ephesians 5:22, 24, 28. See Ernest Best, Ephesians (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 15. See also Paul Hartog’s study of Polycarp’s use of Ephesians as Scripture, "Polycarp, Ephesians, and ‘Scripture’," Westminster Theological Journal 70 (Fall 2008): 255-275. Hartog dates Polycarp’s Epistle to the Philippians to the time of Trajan, thus sometime before 117 CE.

37 That there were those who wrote letters ascribed to Paul is indicated by 2 Thes. 2:2, 3:17, as well as the report of Tertullian (160-225 CE) regarding a presbyter accused of writing a pseudonymous letter from Paul (De Baptismo 17).

38 Patricia A. Rosenmeyer, Ancient Epistolary Fictions: The Letter in Greek Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 194-195. See Rosenmeyer’s discussion of denunciations of pseudonymous literature by early modern classical scholars and the influence these denunciations have had upon subsequent scholarship, 195.

nonetheless successfully argues that Niklas Holzberg’s genre requirements for epistolary novels are also applicable to pseudonymous letters as a literary genre: 1) scenes are evoked from the life of a famous person from history through that person’s letters; 2) the letters intentionally give the impression of having been really written by the supposed author (which can sometimes result in inadvertent anachronisms); 3) the supposed author’s feelings, thoughts, and experiences are discussed and developed.⁴⁰ As Rosenmeyer comments, “The most obvious shared trait of all the pseudonymous collections is their supposed historicity.”⁴¹ In other words, as a literary genre, the pseudonymous letter is intentionally written to appear to have been authored by a known historical personage and in such a way as to illustrate for more contemporary readers the supposed author’s way of thinking and worldview. The purpose for this, as Rosenmeyer explains, is to offer a “glimpse into the glorious . . . past from a more personal angle, and the illumination of a particular historical figure.”⁴² Rosenmeyer further observes that the interest in classicizing and a fascination with the documents of the past are symptomatic of both Hellenistic and later imperial times. In this case, the author focuses on one individual and illuminates his life through imaginary letters. The letter writer presents an “apology” for the hero's life, or challenges a later generation to admire his accomplishments, viewing and interpreting historical events through the lens of one man's personal correspondence. The epistolary genre implies a focus on the inner life of the “hero,” and the reader is then invited to identify with the ego of the letter. This type of writing has its roots in . . . rhetorical character sketches (ethopoieia). By the Roman imperial period, the imaginative composition of letters to and from famous men had become a standard component of the rhetoric syllabus, and is clearly related to the fictitious

⁴⁰ Rosenmeyer, 196-197.
⁴¹ Ibid., 197.
⁴² Ibid.
speech put into a character’s mouth and delivered on a specified mythical or
historical occasion.\textsuperscript{43}

For Rosenmeyer, the real author of the pseudonymous letter was “both scholar and
creative artist, researching historical materials in order to define the bounds of the
tradition, and using his imagination to elaborate creatively and dramatically on that
tradition.”\textsuperscript{44} In other words, the real author wrote the letter as a service to readers,
creatively synthesizing the teaching of a famous historical person, often a philosopher or
recognized sage, and adapting that teaching in such a way as to make it intelligible and
meaningful to a more contemporary audience.

Judging from the numbers and varieties of extant pseudonymous letters, including
whole collections of letters by a particular author, philosophers were among the most
popular of pseudonymous authors. There are Cynic epistles, Pythagorean letters, even
collections of pseudonymous letters from Socrates. Rosenmeyer observes that,
particularly in regard to the Socratic collection, the letters serve to “praise the actions and
words of their hero, confirm the importance of his beliefs, and transfer the oral tradition
that developed around him into a more permanent written form.”\textsuperscript{45} The varieties of letters
in these collections point to the existence of rival schools which used the pseudonymous
letter format as a way to debate their own particular point of view.

It is not difficult to see how the pseudonymous letter would have similar practical
usefulness for a Christian audience as for students of philosophical schools. To begin

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid. See also Holzberg, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{44} Rosenmeyer, 198-199.
\textsuperscript{45} Rosenmeyer, 201.
with, it brings to life again in a very practical and accessible way the thinking of a great hero in the tradition. At a time of renewed interest in history and origins, a letter from a Christian hero can serve to make the early days of Christian history more understandable. By creatively incorporating and synthesizing older original material, the real author summarizes the basic message of the hero and adapts it to a more contemporary context for a new generation.

Finally, when one remembers that the genre of the pseudonymous letter was popular particularly among philosophical schools from the first century CE on, its appropriation by early Christians suggests that they saw themselves in some way as a philosophical school long before Justin Martyr’s (103-165 CE) claim of Christianity as a “school of philosophy.”\(^{46}\) This is not surprising considering how for generations, Diaspora Jewish apologists from Aristobulus (second century BCE) on describe Judaism as a “school of philosophy,” and even “pre-eminent” among Hellenistic philosophical schools.\(^{47}\) Ephesians’ emphasis on “wisdom” (1:8; 1:17; 3:10) and “knowledge” (1:17; 3:19; 4:13), its admonishment to “live, not as the unwise but as the wise” (5:15), along with the similarity between its paraenetical and protreptic exhortations and those of moral philosophers of the time, together suggest that its author understood Paul in some way, along with his antinomian Christ-confessing teachings, as analogous to contemporary schools of philosophy. The adoption by a Christian author of a favorite genre used by philosophical schools can thus be viewed as an attempt to elevate a minority Christ-

\(^{46}\) Dial. 8.1-2.

believing, originally Jewish sect, to the same level as well-known ancient and respectable schools of philosophy and to provide Christian readers with comparable literature of their own.

Thus, the position here is that the Epistle to the Ephesians is representative of the sort of epistolary fiction known to be popular in the first century CE. Characteristic of this genre of literature was its claim to authorship by a venerated hero from the history of the philosophical movement or school which promoted the “letters” as summaries or “snippets” of the hero’s teachings. Epistolary fiction can take various forms, and the form most apparent in Ephesians is that of an epistolary homily which blends the rhetorical style of Hellenistic Jewish sermons with that of the paraenetical discourses of moral philosophers. It is written in what the author believed was the spirit of Paul and designed to be delivered in such a way as to evoke his memory, presented in the reverential tones appropriate for someone who, by his extensive missionary labors and martyrdom, was regarded as a Christian hero. This would be similar to the fictitious sixth letter of Socrates written in the first century CE which holds up the famed Greek sage of a bygone era as a model of a Cynic lifestyle.48 Just as first century CE readers of Socrates’ letters would know that he was not the real author, the original intended audience of the Epistle to the Ephesians would likewise know that this document was not really written by Paul (they would likely have known that he had died a martyr’s death some years before), but they treasured it just the same as a beautifully written and eloquent summary of what was presented to them as authentic Pauline teaching, written

by someone in the persona of Paul, i.e., someone whom they could trust to have known 
the mind and heart of Paul through intimate acquaintance on some level and who could 
“translate” Paul’s thought for their situation.

Likely Setting and Location

Scholars generally agree that the Epistle to the Ephesians gives very few hints as to its original setting or location. What may we glean ourselves from the epistle regarding its original setting? To be sure, even the location of its intended audience is a textually perplexing one which generates scholarly debate from the very first verse. The source of the confusion is the fact that the words ἐν Ἐφέσῳ (“in Ephesus”) are absent from several important early manuscripts along with some syntactical difficulties in the text, particularly the grammatically unnecessary pronoun οὖσιν (from εἶναι, “to be”) and the redundant use of καὶ (“and”) in 1:1b: τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ καὶ πιστοῖς (“to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful”). Because of the absence of ἐν Ἐφέσῳ in early manuscripts, some scholars refuse to link this epistle with Ephesus or the early Christian movement there.51

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49 For a brief yet helpful discussion of the “fictional setting” of the epistle and the problems inherent in the presumption that the apparent setting is the epistle’s actual setting, see Nils Alstrup Dahl, Studies in Ephesians (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2000), 452-453.

50 Pφ*, Ρ*, B*, 424ε, 1739, as well as Basil and Origen while Tertullian and Ephraem lack any explicit quotation of the words ἐν Ἐφέσῳ. See Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft United Bible Societies, 2002), 532. Lincoln offers compelling reasons for eliminating it as not original (Ephesians, 1-4).

51 Cf., Paul Trebilco, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 89-94. Trebilco also objects to the incongruity of a letter supposedly written to a Christian community with whom Paul stayed a length of time yet who does not know him and have only “heard about” him. Following Trebilco, Mikael Tellbe maintains that “there is no clear indication dating from the first century that this letter was written to, or connected with, Christ-believers specifically situated
The absence of a place name in some early manuscripts, however, is not unique to Ephesians and can be found in various copies of both Romans and 1 Corinthians; as Jerome Murphy O’Connor explains, by eliminating geographical references, a letter could more easily be “universalized.” In fact, the oldest extant manuscript copy of Ephesians, P46, dated to around the mid second century CE, has the title ΠΡΟϹΕΦΕϹΙΟΥϹ (“to Ephesians”) at the top of its first leaf, clear evidence for a very early tradition connecting this epistle with the Christians of Ephesus. Nonetheless, the same manuscript, P46, is missing the place name ἐν Ἐφέσῳ (“in Ephesus”) in verse one. Certainly the general nature of Ephesians suggests multiple communities for its intended audience, despite the addition of ἐν Ἐφέσῳ by later copyists who, in accord with the traditional title ΠΡΟϹΕΦΕϹΙΟΥϹ (“to Ephesians”), inserted it at the beginning of the text for the sake of clarity, especially for oral reading and proclamation in liturgical use. Consequently, because of the lack of ἐν Ἐφέσῳ in the earliest manuscripts and the more general character of the epistle, it may very well be that this epistle was originally

in Ephesus.” See Tellbe’s Christ-Believers, 54. Regarding the objections of Trebilco and Tellbe, see the discussion below.


53 Although many scholars date P46 to around the year 200 CE (or somewhere between 175-225 CE), see the compelling arguments offered by Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett for dating this important papyrus to the mid-second century: The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 2001), 204-206.

54 High resolution digital images of P46 in full color can be accessed from the University of Michigan server through the following website: http://www.bible-researcher.com/links19.html. In regard to the title at the top of leaf one, ΠΡΟϹΕΦΕϹΙΟΥϹ, the shape of its letters and color of ink, as viewed from this high resolution image, appear to match those of the rest of the text, suggesting that this title is from the same hand, and was likely written at the same time that the manuscript was copied.
directed to a larger Gentile Christian audience beyond any single church or regional Christian community.

Thus, given the epistle’s heavy dependence upon Colossians and its traditional title following the earliest manuscript tradition (𝔓⁴⁶) “to Ephesians,” it is probable that the geographical origin of the letter is western Asia Minor. Further, because this is the most ancient title given to this epistle, and because it connects this epistle with the Christians of Ephesus, the likely place in which this pseudonymous letter was written is Ephesus.⁵⁵

A little more than a hundred miles from Colossae and its neighbor, Laodicea (Col. 2:1; 4:13,15,16), Ephesus was a proud coastal city which boasted of its status as "the first and greatest metropolis of Asia" on numerous inscriptions.⁵⁶ Because of its strategic location both on land and by sea, the city became a major center of international trade and communication, with sea traffic from the Aegean in the west, the Bosporus and Dardanelles in the north, Palestine in the East, and Egypt in the south, while the ancient Persian Royal Road connected Ephesus with places beyond the Euphrates.⁵⁷ It had long been a vibrant Mediterranean port and, in the imperial period, grew to become the third

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⁵⁵ While scholars such as Trebilco and Tellbe reject any association between Ephesians and the church at Ephesus (see note 52 above), they are not able to offer a satisfactory answer as to why this document has ΠΡΟϹϹΦΕϹΙΟΥϹ as its title. Yet, because of the references to Ephesus in 1 and 2 Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:18, 4:12), both Trebilco and Tellbe maintain a link between the pseudepigraphical Pastoral Epistles and Ephesus, while neither takes into account the title ΠΡΟϹϹΦΕϹΙΟΥϹ written as the title at the top of leaf one of 𝔃⁴⁶. Without a compelling reason to explain away this title, their dismissal of a connection between Ephesus and the Epistle to the Ephesians is puzzling.


⁵⁷ Trebilco, Early Christians, 17-18.
major urban center of the Empire after Rome and Alexandria, swelling to a population estimated at between 200,000 and 250,000. When the Epistle to the Ephesians was written, Ephesus had been under Roman influence and control in one way or another for more than two hundred years and had functioned as the capital of Roman Asia for more than a century, having been designated as such by Augustus in 27 BCE. Under Roman rule, the city greatly flourished and prospered and, along with having a harbor on all major sea routes in the eastern Mediterranean, was placed at the head of the Roman roads into the interior, facilitating communication and commerce with the new cities founded there. Yet besides being the seat of Roman provincial government, Ephesus also served as an intellectual and economic capital and was a major religious center as well, being home to the Temple of Artemis, or the Artemision, a site of international pilgrimage considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Ephesus also had a sizeable, influential, and prosperous Jewish population,

58 Dio Cassius calls Ephesus the “the most distinguished city of Asia” (51.20.6–9). Josephus likewise calls it the “chief city of Asia” (Ant. 14.22). Trebilco, Early Christians, 17. For a discussion of population estimates for Roman Ephesus, see Murphy-O’Connor, St. Paul’s Ephesus, 131. See also L. Michael White, “Urban Development,” 40-49. White claims that, given the high child mortality rate (50% by age five), and a negative ratio of births to deaths (-1.0% per annum), the growing population of the city, as described in ancient sources, would “require a substantial influx of immigrants” with a concomitant “considerable impact on the overall ethnic makeup of the city” (45-48).

59 Although there was a sizeable population of Romans living throughout Asia Minor, including Ephesus, beginning sometime in the early to mid-second century BCE, the city first came under Roman control in 133 BCE. See Trebilco, Early Christians, 11-16, for a brief survey of Ephesus under Roman rule.

60 According to Philostratus, Ephesus was “a city which took the beginning of its race from the purest Attic [stock], and which grew in size beyond all other cities of Ionia and Lydia, and stretched herself out to the sea, outgrowing the land on which she is built, and is filled with studious inhabitants, both philosophers and rhetoricians, thanks to whom the city owes her strength not to her cavalry, but to the myriads of humans in whom she inculcates wisdom” (Vit. Ap. 8.7.8 (LCL; trans. F.C. Conybeare). Strabo describes it as “the largest commercial center (ἐμπόριον) in Asia” (14.1.24).

generally estimated at around 25,000. The Jews of Asia Minor as a whole were comparable to that of Alexandria: they were generally urban, Greek-speaking, highly assimilated to Hellenistic culture, well-educated, acquainted with Greek literature and philosophical movements, diverse, and, in most (if not all) respects, Torah-abiding. A number of them were even Roman citizens.

The great city of Ephesus, then, was home to magistrates, bankers, intellectuals, and philosophers, and the destination of traders, businessmen, religious seekers, and refugees from all over the Mediterranean world and beyond. It was a truly international city, a place of philosophical and religious speculation where ideas were shared and exchanged and home to various schools of philosophical inquiry. It was in this vibrant, burgeoning, diverse Hellenistic Roman cosmopolitan city that the primitive Christian community of Ephesus first began sometime in the early to mid-fifties CE among the

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62 See Rick Strelan, *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus* (New York: W. de Gruyter, 1996), 181. Thomas A. Robinson, however, offers a much higher estimate at about 75,000. See Robinson’s *The Bauer Thesis Examined; the Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church* (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen, 1988), 114. Philo claims that the Jews in Asia and Syria were “very numerous in every city” (*Legat.* 245) while Josephus states that there was “a great multitude of Jews” who lived in the cities of Ionia (*A.J.* 16.27; cf. 16.166).

63 W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984, 1985), 38-39. Frend points out some rather surprising examples of how the Jews of Asia Minor could be different from their “stricter counterparts”: prominent Jews in Melitus, for example, had special seats for the games in the amphitheater; the first century synagogue of Sardis was built into the same edifice as the baths-gymnasium complex in the center of the city and even decorated with “pagan imagery.” See also Barclay’s discussion on the Jews in Asia Minor, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 259-281, and Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 19.

64 In 49 BCE, according to Josephus, the Roman consul L. Lentulus Crus released from military service practicing Jews in Ephesus who were also Roman citizens (*Ant.* 14:228). Barclay interprets this to mean that there were "sufficiently many [Jews who were also Roman citizens] to make it worthwhile to issue special directives about them" (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 271).
Jewish population there.\textsuperscript{65} By the end of the first century CE, Ephesus would become the home of a growing and assorted Christian population.\textsuperscript{66} In fact, an important center for early Christianity, it is frequently mentioned in the New Testament.\textsuperscript{67} While many of these references to Ephesus link Paul to the Christian community there (Acts 18:19-28; 19:1; 20:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:32; 16:8; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:18; 4:12),\textsuperscript{68} the New Testament itself offers evidence of other Christian communities of Ephesus not traditionally associated with Paul. John the Prophet, for example, the refugee from Palestine in the wake of the First Jewish Revolt (66-73 CE) considered the final author of the Book of Revelation, directed both criticism and praise for the church in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7), while another John, John the Presbyter, the stated author of 1 and 2 John, is also linked to Ephesus.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{65} Trebilco, \textit{Early Christians}, 37, 51.

\textsuperscript{66} Assuming a total population of about 200,000 in Ephesus at the end of the first century, Tellbe estimates that the Christian population at this time would be somewhere between one fourth of one percent to one percent of the total population of the city, in other words, between five hundred and two thousand people (\textit{Christ-Believers in Ephesus}, 47). Robert Wilken, however, estimates that in the early second century (at the time of Pliny’s letters to Trajan), out of a total population of sixty million around the empire there were less than fifty thousand Christians all together, or only .08\% of the entire population. If this were applied to Ephesus, it would give a Christian population of about two hundred. Ephesus, however, being a major city, likely had a higher concentration of Christians than everywhere else, except for Rome and Alexandria. See Robert L. Wilken, \textit{The Christians as the Romans Saw Them} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 31.

\textsuperscript{67} Acts 18:19-28; 19:1; 20:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:32; 16:8; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:18; 4:12; Rev. 2:1-7.

\textsuperscript{68} Besides 1 Corinthians, all but two of Paul’s genuine letters were written from Ephesus: Philippians, Galatians, Philemon, and much of 2 Corinthians. The other two (1 Thessalonians and Romans) were written at Corinth. Cf. Helmut Koester, "Ephesus in Early Christian Literature," in \textit{Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture} (ed. Helmut Koester; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 122.

\textsuperscript{69} In regard to John the Prophet, see David E. Aune, \textit{Revelation} (3 vols; WBC 52; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1997-1998), 1:lvii. Aune cautions against equating John the Prophet (sometimes referred to as “John the Seer” or “John of Patmos”) with the John associated with Johannine Literature, that is, John the Presbyter (Elder). Aune echoes the majority opinion when he states that there are "very few features that
Certainly, the diverse, cosmopolitan atmosphere of Ephesus in the closing decades of the first century CE, a city with strong Roman, Greek, and Jewish influences, and home, not only to a strong Pauline mission, but to a variety of other Christian groups as well, would be a fitting location for a pseudonymous letter from Paul, not to any household church in particular, nor to a regional cluster of household churches, but instead, to the Church writ large, the universal Church envisioned by the author and composed of all the “fellow citizens with the holy ones” who have a special seat with Christ in the ever expansive household of God (Eph. 2:6,19).

**Audience**

What does the epistle imply about its audience? To begin with, the epistle specifically addresses, not a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile Christians, but Gentile proselytes (2:11; 3:1), those who have already “heard the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation” (1:13) and, having been “made alive together with Christ and raised up with him” (2:1,5-6), are now being further instructed into what this new life in Christ implies and how it must positively transform their life in new ways. Nor have they become members of a (primarily Gentile) Church no longer identifying on some level with the Jewish roots of their faith in Christ. On the contrary, with instruction replete with allusions both to Jewish Scripture and literature, the author reminds them that, while prior
to baptism they were “alienated from the *politeia* (‘citizenship,’ ‘commonwealth,’ ‘state,’ ‘political body’) of Israel,” they have now been “brought near in the blood of Christ” (2:11-13). Not only that, but Christ has made both Jew and Gentile one, breaking down the “dividing wall of hostility,” and “abolishing (καταργήσας) in his flesh the Law of the commandments in their regulations,” thereby “creating one new humanity in place of two” (2:14-16). Because of their baptism, these Gentiles are “no longer foreigners and aliens” (ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι) but “fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God” (συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεου) (2:19). The author makes repeated efforts to insist to these Gentile Christians that they share in all the benefits of full membership in the *politeia* of Israel. There is to be no doubt that, although they were once “godless Gentiles” (2:12), they are now full members of a new entity composed of the union of Gentiles and Jews, created by Christ’s blood, and formed by him into one body (2:13).

Ethnically, then, the audience are Gentiles who have joined a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians for whom the Jewish Scriptures are still regarded as authoritative in some way, even if the “regulations and ordinances” (2:15) of Torah are no longer binding. Socio-economically, these proselytes form a mixed group as well, and represent the various strata of Hellenistic Roman society; some are householders while others are slaves. The household code, for example, reveals the sorts of people who would be expected to be present at a gathering of a local house church (5:21-6:9) as they are each addressed directly: householders, men, women, married couples, parents, children, slaves. In fact, in contrast to 1 Cor. 7:32-38, married couples are presumed to be
the norm; there is no recommendation at all to anyone to remain single. Further, judging from the literary quality of the epistle in which Paul’s teachings are presented, the author expected a literate and educated audience. Besides a Pentateuch, cited both directly and indirectly as authoritative Scripture, the epistle also seems to presume that the household churches to whom it is sent will have their own collection of Paul’s letters (3:3-4). Indeed, a pseudonymous epistle from Paul presumes that its readers are already familiar with Paul’s letters and that these are highly prized and valued, enough so that readers would welcome this “newest” letter from “Paul” as a way to reflect upon and consider his legacy and teachings anew.

### The Purpose for Which Ephesians Was Written

When considering the purpose for which Ephesians was written, two factors must be taken into consideration. The first is the content of the epistle itself and the second is the epistle’s close relationship to Colossians. In regard to the epistle’s content, it purports to offer Gentile converts a summary of Paul’s own teachings on the significance, effects, consequences, and demands of baptism, as will become clear in the discussions in succeeding chapters. The first half of the epistle (chapters 1-3) is thus largely a summary of Paul’s theological teachings (as interpreted by the author) while the second half (chapters 4-6) is a summary of Paul’s ethical instructions (again, as these are interpreted

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71 This need not presume a Pauline Church but that by this time there is some sharing of Christian literature among various household churches, whether within the Pauline orbit or outside it.
by the author). Readers are directed to Paul’s letters if they want to read Paul’s teachings at greater length (3:3-4).

The epistle’s relationship to Colossians, however, suggests an additional purpose. Indeed, scholars have long puzzled over the very obvious literary relationship between Colossians and Ephesians.72 Both claim to be letters from Paul while in prison, along with the undisputed letters Philemon and Philippians.73 Yet, unlike Philemon and Philippians, indeed, unlike any of the other letters of Paul whether disputed or undisputed, Colossians and Ephesians alone are notable for their cosmic Christology which develops and goes far beyond Paul’s idea of Christ as the Kyrios, or Lord, of the

72 See the more detailed discussion of the relationship of the two epistles offered in Chapter Two.

73 Colossians shows a clear literary dependence upon Philemon, naming the same authors (Paul and Timothy: Col. 1:1; Phlm. 1) and listing the same greeters (Epaphras, Aristarchus and Mark, Demas and Luke: Col. 4:10-14; Phlm. 23-24), while the reference to Tythicus in Col. 4:7 as bringing news of Paul has a direct parallel in Eph. 6:21. On the surface, at least, all this would suggest that the three letters were written during an imprisonment of Paul and sent around the same time. Philippians, too, is a prison letter from Paul and thought to have been written in the mid-fifties CE from Ephesus, but its Christology of a pre-existent and exalted Christ is not the same as that of the middle-Platonic demiurge that we see in the Christ of Colossians. In fact, because of Colossians’ high Christology, what James D. G. Dunn calls a “post-Pauline theology,” most scholars who attribute Pauline authorship to Colossians would want to date it as late as possible in Paul’s career, i.e., the early sixties CE, and thus to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. The problem, however, is that a date of the mid-fifties from an imprisonment in Ephesus for the letter to Philemon makes more sense in regard to the people mentioned in the letter and their supposed connections with Asia Minor (e.g., Epaphras, Paul’s “fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus” in Phlm. 1:23 who is mentioned in Col. 4:12 as being from Colossae, as well as Onesimus, the slave about whom Philemon is written who, like Epaphras, is from Colossae, according to Col. 4:9). The shared elements with Philemon would then suggest that Colossians was written before Romans and 2 Corinthians, although neither of the latter share Colossians’ developed “post-Pauline” theology or cosmological interests. Yet the more developed Christology of Colossians suggests a date after Romans and 2 Corinthians. For a discussion on the debates regarding the dating and location of Colossians and Philemon, see James D. G. Dunn, The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 35-41, 307-08.

The difficulties are resolved, however, when both Colossians and Ephesians are viewed as pseudonymous letters, with Colossians borrowing elements from Philemon, and Ephesians borrowing elements from Colossians. This allows for the more logical mid-fifties Ephesus date for Philemon, and explains in a more convincing way the developing trajectory of Pauline theology from Romans, 2 Corinthians, and Philippians (all dated to around the mid to late fifties CE) to Colossians (in the eighties?) and then to Ephesians (around 90 CE), rather than from Colossians (and possibly Ephesians) in the mid-fifties to Romans and 2 Corinthians, written shortly after Paul’s imprisonment in Ephesus.
universe in Phil 2:6-11. For example, words and expressions common to the language of contemporary philosophy, particularly the language of philosophical discussion of the kosmos, or universe, i.e., are found only in Colossians and Ephesians. This becomes especially clear with the use of words such as plēroma, “fullness,” when used in a way not found in Paul’s other epistles: τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος (“the fullness of divinity,” Col. 1:19; 2:9) and τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου (“the fullness of the one who fills all in all,” Eph. 1:23). Likewise, τὰ πάντα, in the more cosmic sense of “the all,” or “the whole universe”(Col. 1:16-17,20;3:11; Eph. 1:10,23;3:9;4:10), is frequently used in a way only rarely found in Paul (1 Cor. 8:6; 15:28; Phil. 3:21). In fact, even beyond any discussion of Ephesians’ dependence upon Colossians, it is obvious that both epistles share in common an overall cosmological presentation of key theological concepts, despite the fact that, as the Dutch scholar George Van Kooten has shown, the cosmologies of both epistles are different in some significant ways.

We must ask, then, why is it that both of these epistles—again, unlike any others in the Pauline corpus—present the teaching of Paul in the language of cosmology? If it were just a question of dependence, of one epistle borrowing from the other, then the cosmology of the one would presumably match that of the other. Yet Van Kooten’s careful study reveals that this is not the case. Instead, the cosmology of Ephesians conforms some elements of Colossians’ eschatology, cosmology, and Christology to

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74 MacDonald, Colossians and Ephesians, 34.

75 George Van Kooten, Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School: Colossians and Ephesians in the Context of Graeco-Roman Cosmology, with a New Synopsis of the Greek Texts (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2003).
Paul’s own. Thus, a second question must be raised and that is, why are there two epistles reputedly from Paul yet each offering its own particular cosmological perspective on what is claimed to be genuine Pauline teaching?

Several possible answers come to mind. The first is that, a generation after Paul’s death, Paul’s teaching on Christ’s imminent return was being called more and more into question, and if this particular teaching of Paul were dismissible, then every other element of Paul’s teaching could be called into question as well. This is because in the Hellenistic Roman period, the language of theological discourse was, above all, the language of philosophers who attempted to understand the nature of the transcendent, or the nature of the gods. Any religious or theological discourse which could not be fitted into some philosophical framework was liable to be dismissed as superstition. What is more, any credible philosophical system had to be coherent, i.e., it had to make sense both as a whole, in all of its components, and individually, in its individual parts. This is to say that, if any single component was dismissible logically, the rest of the philosophical or religious system was dismissible as well. For both Colossians and Ephesians, the language of cosmology becomes a way to take the emphasis off Paul’s  

76 See Van Kooten’s discussion (147-203) of the ways in which the author of Ephesians revises the eschatology, cosmology, and Christology of Colossians.


78 See the recent essay by Peter Van Nuffelen on Varro’s justification of traditional Roman religion on the basis of Greek philosophy, particularly Stoicism, "Varro's Divine Antiquities: Roman Religion as an Image of Truth," Classical Philology 105 (April 2010): 162-188.

79 Although later writers such as Plutarch would disagree, Cicero, for example, extolls what he sees as the coherence of Stoic philosophy: “Where do you find a conclusion inconsistent with its premise, or a discrepancy between an earlier and a later statement? Where is lacking such close interconnexion of the parts that, if you alter a single letter, you shake the whole structure? Though indeed there is nothing that it would be possible to alter” (De finibus 3.74 [H. Rackham, LCL]).
teaching of an imminent “day of the Lord”\textsuperscript{80} and to emphasize instead a realized eschatology highlighting what had already been achieved by Christ’s death and resurrection, stressing its cosmological impact and importance, particularly in regard to the baptized, their incorporation into Christ’s Body, the Church, and the new nature, Christ’s own, which they take upon themselves by being baptized into his death and raised up with him. Paul’s teaching is not thereby erased, only subordinated to the highly emphasized realized eschatology of Colossians and Ephesians, which their authors would still consider authentically Pauline teaching, only adapted and updated.

A second answer would be that, contrary to the memory of the quick dismissal of Paul’s preaching by the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers of Athens (Acts 17:18,32), a later generation of Pauline Christians saw it as both possible and even necessary to offer a summary of Pauline theology which was in some way compatible with cosmological ideas known to the educated elite of the day.\textsuperscript{81} At a time when religious practice and belief had to be justifiable on philosophical grounds, it became important to justify Paul’s theological teachings by adapting them to a respectable philosophical worldview. In

\textsuperscript{80} Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6,10; 2:16; 1 Thes. 5:2. It is noteworthy that the reference to “the day of the Lord” is to be found in all of Paul’s undisputed letters but not in Colossians or Ephesians. This is not to say that there are no references at all to the \textit{parousia} (see Col. 3:4), but that these are downplayed in importance in Colossians and Ephesians while the realized eschatology of Christ’s present cosmic rule is emphasized instead. As James D. Dunn points out, “there is a striking consistency in imminence of expectation throughout the undisputed letters of Paul.” This “imminence of expectation” is not found in either Colossians or Ephesians. For a discussion of Paul’s undisputed letters and his sense of “eager expectation” of Christ’s imminent return, see Dunn’s The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 311-12.

\textsuperscript{81} The polemic against “false philosophy” in Col. 2:8 hints at the need to engage more fully and credibly the challenges to Pauline teaching posed by those educated in philosophy. Christopher Gill observes that “by the late Republican period, philosophy had come to play a significant part in the education of upper-class Greeks and Romans.” This continued to be true well into the imperial period. See Gill’s essay, "The School in the Roman Imperial Period," in The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics (ed. Brad Inwood; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 56.
short, what we see happening in regard to both Colossians and Ephesians is the attempt to make sense of Pauline theology in the “religious” language of the time, i.e., philosophy, and cosmology became a way of expressing one’s philosophy in terms of the transcendent and universal.82

To put it another way, in his discussion of the cosmological Christ, a later disciple of Paul, i.e., the author of Colossians, attempts to adapt Paul’s Christology to a popular philosophical category of the time, namely, cosmology (Col. 1:12-20; 2:9-15,19-20; 3:1-4).83 This is done with an apologetic motive and from a need to respond to the challenges posed by “philosophy and empty deceit” (Col. 2:8). When comparing Colossians to Ephesians, however, one finds in Ephesians a more developed cosmology where, as we will see in Chapter Four, everything on the macro-level of τὰ πάντα, “the all” or the universe, has its parallel on the micro-level, so that, just as in any good Stoic cosmological system, the one becomes a mirror reflecting the other and the part

82 See, for example, the essay by David Furley, "Cosmology," The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy (eds. Algra Keimpe et al; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 448-451; in the same volume, see also Jaap Mansfeld, "Theology," 452-478.

83 One of Van Kooten’s major arguments is that Colossians represents a further Hellenization of both Paul’s cosmology and his Jewish eschatology. This can be observed in four ways: 1) through what Van Kooten refers to as Colossians’ use of “Prepositional Metaphysics,” 2) Christ’s role in creating the cosmos, 3) “the notion of filling the universe” (Col. 1:19), and 4) “the notions of cosmic reconciliation and peace.” Using primary sources, Van Kooten offers numerous convincing parallels that each of the above have with contemporary Hellenistic-Roman philosophical discussions of cosmology, rather than with Paul himself (122-129). As Van Kooten explains, “Paul himself has merely a passing interest in Christ’s cosmological function and speaks only once of Christ through whom (δι’ οὗ) all things were created (1 Cor 8.6b). Otherwise it is God from whom (ἐξ οὗ), through whom (δι’ οὗ) and for whom (εἰς αὐτόν) all things are said to have their being” (1 Cor 8.6a; Romans 11.36: ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτόν τὰ πάντα). The special emphasis which the author of Colossians places on Christ’s role in creating the cosmos is scarcely prefigured in the authentic Paul” (125-126). Nor is it to be found in Ephesians. In this sense, the Christology of Ephesians should be viewed as a move toward the Christology of Paul’s undisputed letters and a revision of the demiurgic Christology of Colossians. The significance of Van Kooten’s work is to show how, in some subtle yet significant ways, the author of Ephesians revises the theology of Colossians, particularly its Christology, cosmology, and eschatology, to conform it more to Paul’s own (as it is known from Paul’s undisputed letters).
resembles the whole—\(^{84}\) even the domestic relationships on the micro-level are to mirror those of “the heavenly places” on the macro-level. For our purposes, this, then, is the essential difference between the two epistles: Ephesians offers a more intentionally developed cosmology in which the macro-levels and micro-levels are to parallel each other in an ideal Christianized cosmic polis, or “kosmopolis,” i.e., the universal Church. As we will see, this will have significant implications for Ephesians’ Christology, ecclesiology, and ethics. It will also have significant implications for the household code. Indeed, when compared side-by-side, the differences between the two epistles, despite Ephesians’ clear dependence upon Colossians, are striking and suggest that the author of Ephesians intended to revise some of the material in Colossians. George Van Kooten has already demonstrated how the author of Ephesians revises the eschatology, cosmology, and Christology of Colossians and conforms these more to Paul’s teachings in his undisputed correspondence.\(^{85}\) This study, in turn, will demonstrate how the author of Ephesians likewise conforms the marital code in Colossians 3:18-19 to Paul’s own teachings on Christian relationships, again as these are found in Paul’s undisputed letters.

To put it another way, beyond merely offering a summary of Paul’s teachings to Gentile readers a generation after Paul, an additional purpose comes to light as we observe the differences between these two very closely related epistles. In its alterations of Colossians, Ephesians shares a similar impulse with that of Matthew and Luke in their own revisions of Mark’s gospel. For Ephesians, however, the alterations are made to

\(^{84}\) Stoicism, particularly Stoic cosmology, had a widespread influence on the Roman world in the early imperial era. See Robert B. Todd, “The Stoics and Their Cosmology in the First and Second Centuries AD,” \textit{ANRW} 236.3, 1365-1378; Gill, "The School,” 33-58. See also Chapter Four, note 65.

\(^{85}\) See notes 76 and 83 above.
Colossians in order a) to conform Colossians’ teachings more to Paul’s own, as gleaned from Paul’s genuine correspondence, and b) to respond more adequately to challenges from philosophically educated Gentiles by presenting Paul’s theology within a more developed cosmological framework.

Summary and Conclusions

To summarize, then, the Epistle to the Ephesians was composed by a Pauline Christian, likely a Jew, certainly someone thoroughly familiar with Paul’s teachings and letters. Judging from both its developed literary style and its direct address to “Gentile” readers, it appears that the epistle was written for a sophisticated Gentile audience. Further, the fact that Ephesians adapts and adjusts so much material from Colossians, and, as Van Kooten has shown, even conforms Colossians more to Paul’s own teachings, suggests that in some ways Colossians was viewed as insufficient in much the same way that Mark was viewed as insufficient by Matthew and Luke. Ephesians, then, is written not only with a view toward providing a useful summary of Paul’s teachings in the language that late first century CE Gentile Christians would understand. As this dissertation will make clear, it is also written to conform Colossians’ theology and ethics more to Paul’s own, according to the author’s interpretation of the apostle’s teachings as these are gleaned from his genuine correspondence.
CHAPTER TWO

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

EPHESIANS 5:21-33 AND COLOSSIANS 3:18-19

Introduction

The previous chapter opened with the observation that the author of Ephesians rewrites the household code of Colossians. In this chapter, we will argue in detail that what we see in Eph. 5:21-6:9 is, in fact, a revised version of the household code of Col. 3:18-4:1. Through a thorough comparison and contrast highlighting both similarities and differences between the household codes of both epistles, this chapter will show how the author of Ephesians revises the household code of Colossians, and even changes in a significant way its original emphasis. We will also show how the author changes the traditional notion of a wife’s subordination to her husband, as seen in Col. 3:18, and rewrites it into an exhortation to mutual subordination in Eph. 5:21. After a brief description of the Epistle to the Colossians, we will look at how each household code fits into the broader context of its respective epistle. Then we will review both household codes through a side-by-side synopsis. All this will be done in order to gain insight into the intent of the author of Ephesians when making changes to the household code of Colossians. Although we will view both household codes side-by-side in their entirety and draw some helpful conclusions from this, ultimately, however, our particular focus is
on the first segment of each household code, specifically that pertaining to wife-husband
relations, referred to here as the marital code.

**The Epistle to the Colossians: Some Preliminary Considerations**

The Epistle to the Colossians purports to be from Paul and Timothy (Col. 1:1). While the letter names various co-missionaries supposedly known to the Colossian Christians, Paul himself is unknown personally to his audience (Col. 1:4, 8; 2:1, 5), and writes to them from prison. His imprisonment, however, although not mentioned until the end of the letter (Col. 4:10, 18), is presumed throughout with multiple references to his patient suffering for the sake of his Gentile audience (Col. 1:24; 2:1, 5), both in Colossae and nearby Laodicea (2:1).

Scholars are divided over questions of authorship of this letter, although a slim majority, sixty percent, believes it to be pseudonymous. For a number of reasons, including its differences in style and language with Paul’s undisputed correspondence, its curious relationship with the letter to Philemon, and its “post-Pauline theology,” the majority opinion that Colossians is, like Ephesians, a pseudepigraphal letter written by followers of Paul after his death is adopted here. Their purpose in writing the epistle was to summarize Paul’s teaching by addressing questions among a new generation of

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1 These would be, in particular, the two Colossian natives Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12), Onesimus (Col. 4:9), and Archippus, a local leader (4:17).


4 See note 73 in Chapter One. See also the discussions on the authorship of Colossians in Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 35-39; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 6-9.
Christians in Asia Minor, Christians who did not know Paul personally but had only heard of him through their teachers who, like Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12), were disciples of Paul. Because Colossae is thought to have been destroyed by an earthquake in the early 60’s CE,5 a pseudonymous letter written to a community no longer in existence could be composed as a piece of epistolary historical fiction, a common literary genre of the time,6 and dated back to when Paul was still alive.

Regardless of the questions revolving around the authorship of this epistle, it is nonetheless well-known to the author of Ephesians. As a matter of fact, while Ephesians either alludes to or cites all of Paul’s undisputed letters,7 its closest parallels are with Colossians: between one third and one half of the one hundred fifty five verses in Ephesians have a direct parallel to Colossians in both order and content.8 Or to put it another way, there are at least twenty two shared themes and topics between the two

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5 According to Tacitus (Annals 14.27.1), an earthquake struck the Lycus Valley sometime in 60-61 CE. Tacitus states that Laodicea, in close proximity to Colossae (Col. 2:1; 4:13-16), recovered without Roman assistance, but Tacitus makes no mention of Colossae. Noting that unlike its more prominent neighbors, Laodicea and Hierapolis, “the [once famous] name of Colossae disappears from history,” Eduard Lohse conjectures that it was likely destroyed by one of the many earthquakes known to hit the region, perhaps the earthquake mentioned by Tacitus, and was not rebuilt. See Eduard Lohse, Colossians and Philemon (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 8-9.

6 See the discussion in Chapter One on the popularity in the first century CE of pseudonymous epigraphy.

7 See the discussion in Chapter Five regarding the sources in Paul’s undisputed letters used by the author of Ephesians.

8 R. Brown, New Testament, 627-628. According to Andrew Lincoln, the relationship between these two epistles is “by far the closest within the Pauline corpus,” and presents “one of the most fascinating of the various enigmas” surrounding the Epistle to the Ephesians (xlvii). The majority opinion of scholars, accepted here, is that Colossians was written first and that Ephesians demonstrates dependence on Colossians in terms of its overall structure and sequence, themes, and terminology, although as Lincoln observes, this dependence is “free and creative, not a slavish imitation or copying” (lv). See Lincoln’s discussion about the priority of Colossians and the dependence of Ephesians on Colossians in his Ephesians (WBC 42; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990); xlvii-lviii.
epistles, including Paul’s imprisonment, the exclusively Gentile audience, Paul’s encouragement of the faith of his Gentile audience although he does not know them personally, a cosmic Christology, and, of course, household management.\(^9\)

That being said, there are some significant differences between the two epistles, and perhaps the most significant have to do with their shared household codes.\(^10\) To be sure, as we will see, there are indeed some similarities between Col. 3:18-4:1 and Eph. 5:21-6:9, but the differences between them are even greater. These differences, which are many, begin with how each household code is integrated both within its more immediate context as well as within the broader context of its respective epistle.

**The Household Code of Col. 3:18-4:1 in its Larger Context**

When looking at the household code of Col. 3:18-4:1 within the larger context of the Epistle to the Colossians, it appears as if written as an afterthought, unconnected from the major themes of the epistle. Indeed, there is little in the epistle itself which would lead to discussions of household management. On the contrary, major overlapping themes of the epistle have to do with instructions against false teaching, the primacy of Christ, and the reliability of the teaching of Paul and his coworkers. What is more, when we look at the immediate context in which it is inserted, the household code of Col. 3:18-4:1 breaks up the continuity between what comes before it in Col. 3:15-17 and what comes after in Col. 4:2-4:

\(^9\) See R. Brown’s list of the twenty two topics shared between the two epistles (628).

\(^10\) The many differences between these two very similar epistles are beyond the scope of the discussion here where we will limit our focus to the shared household codes.
15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. 22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, 24 since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. 4:1 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, 4 so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should. (NRSV)

Notice, for example, how the ideas of gratitude, thanksgiving, and prayer pervade vv. 15-17 with the mention of psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, and thanksgiving. These ideas are resumed again in Col. 4:2-4. Clearly the ideas of the household code in Col. 3:18-4:1 do not fit their immediate context. As a matter of fact, removing the household code improves the flow of thought between what comes before it and what comes after:

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. . . 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. 3 At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, 4 so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should. (NRSV)
Here we can see that, with the household code omitted, nothing in the surrounding context of Col. 3:15-17 and 4:2-4 would even hint that there were verses missing, let alone instructions on household management. Yet when these verses are replaced, suddenly, out of context and without any introduction, wives are addressed in 3:18, followed by husbands, children, fathers, slaves, and masters in 3:19-4:1. In fact, the entire household code has no connection, either grammatically, syntactically, or contextually, to what comes either before it or after.  

The Household Code of Eph. 5:21-33 in Its Broader Context

The household code of Ephesians, by contrast, is carefully constructed to fit the context of what precedes it. Looking at its immediate context beginning with v. 15, we see that the author refashions material borrowed from Col. 4:5 and Col. 3:16-18 and uses it to introduce the household code which begins with 5:21:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Col. 4:5</th>
<th>Eph. 5:15-21</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders</td>
<td>15 Be careful then how you live not as unwise</td>
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<tr>
<td>making the most of the time.</td>
<td>people but as wise,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16 making the most of the time, because the days</td>
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<td></td>
<td>are evil.</td>
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</tbody>
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11 For the reasons discussed here, there has been some debate as to whether or not the household code of Col. 3:18-4:1 is original or if it was added on at some later time. See the summary of the debate in Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 242-243. See also David Balch, "Household Codes," *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (ed. David Aune; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25-50. If the household code of Col. 3:18-4:1 is, in fact, a later interpolation, it was nonetheless inserted into the text of the epistle before Ephesians was written since, given the same sequence, wording, and expressions shared between Col. 3:18-4:1 and Eph. 5:21-6:9, the author of Ephesians clearly knows the household code of Colossians, as will become clear in the discussion below. Margaret Y. MacDonald believes that, although Col. 3:18-4:1 is an “independent unit, only loosely connected to what comes before and after” (152), that it fits, nonetheless, with the epistle’s larger concerns regarding outsiders (Col. 4:5-6) and was likely written for apologetic purposes (161-162). See Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 152-169.
Col. 3:16-18

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. and

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him.

18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. . . .

Eph. 5:15-21 (continued)

17 So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts,

20 giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

21 being subordinate to one another out of respect for Christ . . .

Saving our comments regarding a comparison and contrast of Col. 3:18/Eph. 5:21 for later, there are two observations worth making here. The first is that Eph. 5:15-21 follows the same basic sequence as Col. 3:16-18. The second is that the author of Ephesians skillfully integrates the household code (Eph. 5:21-6:9) with what comes before it by using the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι, “being subordinate,” and making it last in a series of participles grammatically linked to the command “be filled with the spirit” in v. 18 (λαλοῦντες, ἄδοντες, ψάλλοντες, εὐχαριστοῦντες, ὑποτασσόμενοι):

καὶ μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἶνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐστιν ἀσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, λαλοῦντες ἐαυτοῖς [ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὑμνοῖς καὶ φθάσεις πνευματικάς, ἄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ, εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντως ύπερ πάντων ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, . . .

12 When we compare the household codes of both epistles below, we will see that Eph. 5:21-6:9 also follows the same basic sequence as Col. 3:18-4:1.
In this way, Eph. 5:21 is constructed as a transitional verse which introduces the household code. Yet it does not really follow logically what precedes it, i.e., singing psalms and hymns and giving thanks, which fit a liturgical setting. Placed where it is, however, it suggests a household church gathering where the members are exhorted to be mutually subordinate to each other as an extension of their common worship. What immediately follows in Eph. 5:22-6:9, however, are not more instructions on liturgy or worship, but instructions on proper relationships within a Christian household.

While following the same basic sequence as that seen in Col. 3:16-4:1, the author of Ephesians is not at all slavish when appropriating material from Colossians. On the contrary, as will become clear, the author so enlarges and elaborates upon the household code borrowed from Col. 3:18-4:1 as to bring together a number of major themes found throughout the rest of Ephesians, chief among them being how the members of the Church are to relate with each other. Indeed, the entire epistle seems to be about relationships in the larger macrocosmic “household of God,” beginning with God’s relationship with the Gentile proselytes to whom the epistle is addressed, namely, that through Jesus Christ, God becomes their Father (1:5). The readers are reminded from the outset that, as any paterfamilias (male head of the household) who decides who belongs and who does not belong in his family, God the Father has “selected” them (ἐξελέξατο, from ἐκλέγω, “to pick or single out”) for adoption as His beloved children.

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13 See the discussion below, “Setting the Text: Where does the Household Code of Ephesians Begin”?

14 Throughout this short epistle, God is referred to as “Father” a total of eight times: “our Father” (1:2); “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (1:3); “the Father of glory” (1:17), “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (4:6). See also 2:18, 3:14, 5:20, and 6:23.
They are now members of the cosmic “imperial family,” so to speak, that is, children of the “Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (4:6). As such, they enjoy numerous benefits: 1) they who were once darkness (5:8) and under the power and authority of evil spirits (2:2; 6:12) are “saved by grace” (2:5,8) and brought under the protection of God’s own potestas, i.e., the power, rule, and authority exercised by the head of the household (1:19); 2) they are true heirs and can thus look forward to participating in the “riches of his glorious inheritance” (1:18); 3) they have become “co-citizens with the saints” (2:19) and “members of the household of God” (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ, 2:19). Indeed, in adopting Gentile believers as beloved children into the Divine household, God, the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3) and “the Father of glory” (1:17) has lavished his favor and largesse upon them (1:8), “for the praise of his glory” (1:6,12,14).

The Divine largesse deserves a generous response. Thus, in the paraenesis in the second half of the epistle beginning with Eph. 4:1, the readers are instructed that the proper response to God’s exceeding kindness to them is to emulate it in their relationships with each other. They are urged to “live in a way worthy of their call” (4:1),

15 Regarding the extensive power of potestas exercised by the Roman paterfamilias over all his living descendants, including his authority to decide who could belong to his family and who was to be excluded, see Judith Evans Grubbs, Women and the Law in the Roman Empire (New York: Routledge, 2002), 20; Suzanne Dixon, The Roman Family (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 40-42. Especially helpful is the essay by Eva Marie Lassen, "The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor," Constructing Early Christian Families: Family As Social Reality and Metaphor (ed. Halvor Moxnes; New York: Routledge, 1997), 103-120. See also Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 136-141.

Regarding adoption, particularly helpful is Jane F. Gardner’s summary of adoption in the Roman world, “Into the Familia: The Practice of Adoption,” in Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 114-208. Gardner observes that “adoption was a device for taking a person out of one familia and placing him or her into another, under the potestas of its paterfamilias. . . The legal relationship between a pater and his adoptive sons was the same as that between him and children born to him in lawful marriage” (117).
to respond to each other “with all humility and meekness, patience, and forbearance in love” (4:2). In short, they are to “become imitators of God as his own dear children” (5:1) and to “walk in love” in imitation of Christ’s love for them (5:2).

It is in this larger context of the imitation of God’s goodness and graciousness that the audience of Ephesians is told how to behave with one another as members of the Church, both when they gather to meet in their household churches in the context of celebrating liturgy (5:15-21) and when they live together within their own homes (5:21-6:9). In this sense, the household code of Ephesians is not at all an interruption, afterthought, or independent unit—quite the contrary. Rather, it forms an important and integral component of the epistle as a whole, offering instructions for household management so that the loving relationships enjoyed in the macrocosm of the Divine household—relationships celebrated, sung, and memorialized in liturgical hymns and worship—may find a faithful reflection in the microcosm of the Christian home.

Setting the Text: Where Does the Household Code of Ephesians Begin?

Before looking at the two household codes side-by-side, one final consideration is in order, and that has to do with where the household code of Ephesians begins. While there is no argument about where it ends (6:9), there has been no small amount of discussion regarding where the household code of Ephesians actually begins, whether with 5:21 or 5:22. This is unlike Colossians where, as we have observed, there is a clear beginning with Col. 3:18, and a clear end with Col. 4:1. The confusion over the beginning of the household code of Ephesians revolves around Eph. 5:21-22. Grammatically, verse 5:21 is a continuation of the sentence that begins with the negative
imperative verb μὴ γίνεσθε (“do not be”) in 5:17: διὰ τούτο μὴ γίνεσθε ἄφρονες, ἀλλὰ συνίετε τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου (“therefore, do not be foolish but be perceptive as to what is the will of the Lord”). In fact, the sentence that begins at 5:17 continues until 5:24 and could be translated literally as follows:

17 Therefore, do not be foolish but be perceptive as to what is the will of the Lord, 18 and do not be drunk with wine, in which is debauchery, but instead be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms and hymns and inspired songs, singing and playing songs of praise to the Lord from the heart, 20 always giving thanks to our God and Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 being subordinate to each other in the fear of Christ, 22 wives to your own husbands as to the Lord, 23 because a husband is the head of his wife as is also Christ the head of the Church, himself savior of the body, 24 but as the Church is subordinated to Christ, so also wives to their husbands in everything.

Such extended sentences are typical of this writer. In this sentence there are three main verbal clauses, “do not be foolish” (μὴ γίνεσθε ἄφρονες), “be perceptive as to what is the will of the Lord” (συνίετε τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου), and “do not be drunk on wine but be filled with the Spirit” (μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἷῳ ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι) followed by, as we saw above, a string of masculine plural participles: “speaking” (λαλοῦντες), “singing and playing [hymns and psalms]” (ᾆδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες), “giving thanks” (εὐχαριστοῦντες), “being subordinate to each other” (ὑποτασσόμενοι ἄλληλοις). These masculine participles refer to a mixed group of both men and women, as becomes obvious with the discussion directed at wives in 5:22-24.

What is most of interest is the last participle in this series, ὑποτασσόμενοι, “being subordinate,” accompanied by the dative plural pronoun, ἄλληλοις, “to each other” in 5:21: ὑποτασσόμενοι ἄλληλοις, “being subordinate to each other.” While ὑποτασσόμενοι grammatically matches the participles that come before it in both gender and number, it
does admittedly stand apart from them in the sense that they clearly refer to liturgical practice, whereas ὑποτασσόμενοι does not readily come to mind as following a logical progression with λαλοῦντες, ἀδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες, and εὐχαριστοῦντες. For this reason, many scholars have rightfully argued that the household code begins in Eph. 5:21 with the idea of mutual subordination. Others, however, overlook the liturgical context of Eph. 5:17ff; they overlook, too, the smoothness with which the author integrates the household code with what comes before while retaining the original sequence in Colossians. To argue that Eph. 5:21 and the expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις does not belong to the household code is, in effect, to argue that the author intended to restructure the instructions in Col. 3:16-17, adding to these instructions the idea of mutual subordination. These same scholars then claim that the household code should properly be thought of as beginning with Eph. 5:22 (and the exhortation to a wife’s subordination only, added by a later scribe). The weakness in the latter argument, however, is compounded when looking at the earliest manuscripts which agree that there is no verb or participle at all in 5:22: αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ (“wives to your own husbands as to the Lord”). The lack of a verb or participle in v. 22, however, makes it grammatically dependent on the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι in v. 21.\footnote{See the discussion in Chapter Three on the textual analysis of vv. 21-22 from the earliest manuscript evidence. Although in no way an exhaustive list, the following is offered if only to give a sense of the debate among scholars regarding where the household code begins. Among those scholars who begin the household code with v. 21 are: Joachim Gnilka, Der Epheserbrief (Freiburg: Herder, 1971); J. Paul Sampley, \textit{And the Two Shall Become One Flesh}: A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Markus Barth, \textit{Ephesians} (2 vols.; AB 34-34A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 2:607ff; C. Leslie Mitton, \textit{Ephesians} (London: Oliphants, 1976); Rudolf Schnackenburg, \textit{Der Brief an die Epheser} (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1982), with English translation by Helen Heron, \textit{Ephesians: A Commentary} (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins} (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 268; Andrew T. Lincoln, \textit{Ephesians} (WBC 42; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990); Martin Kitchen,
scholars might like a tighter form, one with more obviously demarcated parameters and a clear beginning and end, this is not at all in the mind of the author who, as we have seen above, clearly had no intention to set apart the instructions on proper marital relations from what comes before in 5:17 where the sentence begins with “do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” For this author, the will of the Lord is for believers to live as God’s beloved sons and daughters “through Jesus Christ” (1:5). This implies a whole new way of relationship, one of mutual subordination to each other (5:21) as members of Christ’s body (4:25; 5:30), and this new way of relationship is to extend even to that shared between husband and wife (5:21-33).

The difficulty encountered when trying to separate the household code in Ephesians 5:21-6:9 from what comes before it offers a clue in regard to how the author understood household ethics. In his study of ancient discussions of ethics, Friedrich Wilhelm observed that three kinds of topoi in particular were commonly combined.

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together and were understood to be so interconnected as to be indistinguishable: τόποι περὶ πολιτείας (topoi concerning matters of the polis and citizenship), περὶ οἰκονομίας (concerning household management), and περὶ γάμου (concerning marriage).  

Wilhelm’s observations regarding the interrelatedness of these three topoi in general can be easily seen in the household code of Ephesians 5:21-6:9 in particular. Or, to put it another way, Ephesians’ own τόποι περὶ γάμου (5:21-33) is embedded within the larger discussion of the τόποι περὶ οἰκονομίας (5:21-6:9), itself embedded within the larger paraenetical discussion beginning with 4:1ff of how Gentiles are to conduct themselves as members of the Church and “co-citizens with the saints,” the τόποι περὶ πολιτείας. In fact, what can be discerned throughout the epistle is a Christianized discussion of the traditional τόποι περὶ πολιτείας, where the polis implied is not the Roman Empire, with its vertical relationships and concerns over rank and status, but the βασιλεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ, “the Kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5).

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According to Rollin A. Ramsaran, a topos (τόπος, plural “topoi,”) is a “‘place’ around which certain recurring themes come together to support argumentation on a specific moral subject (e.g., civil concord, marriage, anger, and slavery versus freedom).” Ramsaran further explains that “Topoi can form combinations with one another in support of a larger subject: topos on civic responsibility, the household, and covetousness could, for example, pertain to a treatise on the state. As part of rhetorical invention, the rhetorician creatively selects, shapes, and applies the traditions chosen from any topos or topoi. Rhetoricians could find maxims in connection with certain topos or develop their own maxims as support of themes with a topos.” See Ramsaran’s essay, “Paul and Maxims,” Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook (ed. J. Paul Sampley; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2003), 429-456, particularly 435.

18 The term “politeia” in Ephesians has overlapping meanings that need not be mutually exclusive. It is clearly a reference to Israel (2:15: πολιτεία τοῦ Ἰσραήλ), with the Church as Israel implied. But is the πολιτεία τοῦ Ἰσραήλ/Church co-terminous with the βασιλεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ και θεοῦ (5:5, the “kingdom of Christ and God”)? It certainly would appear that the Church, viewed in universal dimensions in much the same way as Josephus views Judaism (C. Ap. 2.188), is understood rhetorically by the author in terms which not only parallel but even replace the polis of the Roman Empire. On this latter point, see Eberhard
there is a profound connection between ethics lived out in the Church, in the household, and within marriage. They are all linked together and cannot be separated. This is true not only grammatically and structurally, but also conceptually. Once again, the ethical relationships lived in the larger household of God are profoundly linked to the relationships within the earthly household, indeed, even within marriage itself.

It should be clear by now that the full integration of the household code of Ephesians within the rest of the epistle is markedly different from what we see in Colossians. Unlike Col. 3:18-4:1, the discussion on household management in Eph. 5:21-6:9 makes sense to the larger context, not only of the broader discussion on ethics beginning with Eph. 4:1ff, but of the epistle as a whole. It does not appear at all as an afterthought but, on the contrary, is a carefully integrated logical component of the paraenetical instructions of the second half of the epistle. In fact, given Wilhelm’s observations, the household code of Ephesians is carefully constructed as an essential component to the larger ethical discussion of the epistle. Nonetheless, the author’s smooth integration of the household code with what precedes it should not fool the reader.

Faust, Pax Christi et pax Caesaris: religionsgeschichtliche, traditionsgeschichtliche und sozialgeschichtliche Studien zum Epheserbrief (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993). See also Balch’s discussion of the ancient definition of politeia as including a shared way of life of a people (Isocrates Areopagitucus 14; Aristotle, Pol. IV 1295b 1), in Let Wives Be Submissive, note 138 (20).

19 Contra Sarah J. Tanzer, "Ephesians," who argues unconvincingly that the household code of Ephesians was added by a later redactor or scribe (325-348). Tanzer’s basic premise is that Eph. 5:22-6:9 affirms hierarchical relationships, thus contradicting the “equality” between Jews and Gentiles in the first half of the epistle. This “contradiction,” then, for Tanzer, indicates that the original author did not intend to include the household code in the epistle. Although much more could be said to challenge her argument, Tanzer’s elimination of 5:21 from the household code creates a hermeneutical problem that the author (or “final redactor,” but that is doubtful as the style of the passage fits the rest of the letter) did not intend. On the contrary, as is argued in this dissertation, the author does not view household relations as at all separate from or in contradistinction to the relationships of mutual subordination that Christians owe each other as members of Christ’s body. In point of fact, the exclusively vertical view of household relations, as seen in Col. 3:18-19, is precisely what the author of Ephesians wishes to challenge.
into thinking that the household code of Ephesians begins with v. 22, the exhortation to wives. On the contrary. Taking all of the above into consideration, the exhortation to mutual subordination in Eph. 5:21 is not written as a revision of Col. 3:16-17. Nor is it written to add to these verses, or to elaborate upon them. As will become clearer in the synopsis below, Eph. 5:21 is written as a direct parallel to Col. 3:18, the verse with which the household code of Colossians very obviously begins, the exhortation to wifely submission. Therefore, the household code of Ephesians must properly be thought of as beginning, not with v. 22, which has no verb or participle, but instead with v. 21: “being subordinate to each other out of reverence for Christ.”

**A Synoptic View of Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Eph. 5:21-6:9**

As already noted, the majority of scholars agree that Ephesians is dependent upon Colossians, and that the author of Ephesians takes material from Colossians and re-shapes and revises it to suit the author’s own theological interests. This is especially evident when comparing the household codes of the two epistles. Here we will see how the household code of Ephesians 5:21-6:9 is dependent upon Colossians 3:18-4:1 and rewrites it. Because of this dependence, both the similarities and differences shared between the two household codes offer insight into what the author of Ephesians deemed important, both to keep and to change. In order to understand how the author rewrites the marital code of Colossians, a comparison and contrast of both household codes in their entirety will be helpful. A synopsis of the two side-by-side will make their similarities

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20 See note 8 above.
and differences readily apparent.\textsuperscript{21} (See Appendix A.)

To begin with, in regard to their similarities, both household codes share the same ordered arrangement: the first section of each focuses on the proper relations between wife and husband (Col. 3:18-19/Eph. 5:21-33), while the second section focuses on child-parent relations (Col. 3:20-21/Eph. 6:1-4) and the third on slave-master relations (Col. 3:22-4:1/Eph. 6:5-9). Moreover, both address the traditionally subordinate partner of each household relationship first while the “superior” partner is addressed afterward: wives, then husbands; children, then parents; slaves, then masters.\textsuperscript{22} There are also a number of shared words and expressions between the two codes, some of which are an exact word-for-word correspondence (sixty words in all, highlighted in bold in Appendix A), others are paraphrases in Ephesians of comparable or synonymous expressions in Colossians (five in all, underlined in Appendix A). In one case, an expression in Col. 3:25, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν προσωπολημψία (“and there is no favoritism”), originally addressed to slaves, is moved and used as a warning to slave masters in Eph. 6:9 (bold italics in Appendix A). There it has a rearranged word order, perhaps for emphasis: καὶ προσωπολημψία οὐκ ἔστιν (literally, “and favoritism there is not”).

This last observation leads us to look carefully at the differences between the two

\textsuperscript{21} The discussion here will be limited to a comparison and contrast of the household codes in Col. 3:18-4:1 and Eph. 5:21-33, saving the discussion of textual variants for the exegetical analysis in Chapter Three.

\textsuperscript{22} Both John H. Yoder and Harold W. Hoehner see this as an important difference with non-Christian household codes where the superior partner is addressed first. See Yoder’s \textit{The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 174-175 and Hoehner’s \textit{Ephesians}, 724. Nonetheless, in his own discussion of ideal household relations as described in his history of the Roman people, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (60-7 BCE) first addresses the proper behavior of the subordinate partner (\textit{Roman Antiquities}, 2.25-26).
household codes, and these are both significant and many. We have already observed one important difference, namely that, whereas Col. 3:18-4:1 appears to be an insertion which interrupts the continuity between Col. 3:17 and Col. 4:2, the household code of Ephesians is smoothly integrated into what comes before it, and that, in fact, Eph. 5:21-6:9 is constructed as an integral part of the paraenetical section of the epistle which begins with 4:1ff, where the readers are instructed to “live a life worthy of [their] calling, with humility and gentleness, patience, bearing with one another through love.” But there are still other noteworthy differences between the two. For example, the household code of Colossians is brief and to the point, while that of Ephesians is an expanded elaboration of what we read in Colossians. Interestingly, however, despite its brevity, the main focus of the household code in Colossians is on the proper behavior of slaves, as can be observed in the extended instruction (56 words) given in three verses (Col. 3:22-25). No other section of the household code in Colossians devotes as much attention to the persons addressed as does the section on slaves. Unlike the exhortation to slaves, the exhortation to wives (3:18), husbands (3:19), children (3:20), fathers (3:21), and slave masters (4:1), each has only one sentence contained in one verse and offer little by way of further commentary, clarification, or explanation. In striking contrast to Colossians, however, the longest exhortation in the household code of Ephesians is not directed at slaves but at husbands—nine verses in all. In fact, unlike what we see in Colossians, the marital code of Ephesians becomes the main focus of the household code as the author expands the two verses on marriage in Col. 3:18-19 into thirteen verses in Eph. 5:21-33!

This brings us to a discussion of the marital code of the two epistles. Although
Eph. 5:21-33 incorporates much of the language and vocabulary of Col. 3:18-19, there are nonetheless significant and striking differences between the two, despite the fact that these differences are often overlooked. To begin with, the marital code of Eph. 5:21-33 has an obvious organized structure. Unlike Col. 3:18-19, Eph. 5:21-33 is framed by an introduction (Eph. 5:21) and a conclusion (Eph. 5:33), which together form an inclusio with the idea of fear.23 The introduction, v. 21, is an exhortation to both partners to be mutually subordinate to each other, while the conclusion offers a summary of the instructions given in Eph. 5:22-31, with a final exhortation to husband and wife, namely that a husband must give his wife love while a wife must show her husband respect.24 Within this framework are the exhortations and their rationale given to married partners, first to wives (Eph. 5:22-24), then to husbands (Eph. 5:25-32), the longest section of the marital code. With this structure, the author of Ephesians highlights the marital code and emphasizes its importance within the larger household code ending at Eph. 6:9. In fact, the greatest emphasis is on the obligations of husbands toward their wives. This is different, as we have just seen, from the emphasis on the proper behavior and attitudes of slaves in the household code of Colossians. With a side-by-side comparison of just the marital codes, we can see how different in structure, content, and focus the two are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Col. 3:18</th>
<th>Eph. 5:21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Αἱ γυναῖκες, υποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ.</td>
<td>υποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 See the discussion on the structure of vv. 21-33 in Chapter Three.

24 The word in the Greek text is a form of the verb φοβέομαι (literally, “to be afraid of”) and forms an inclusion with φόβος (literally, “fear”) in 5:21. See the discussion in Chapter Three on ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ in 5:21 and on φοβήται τὸν ἄνδρα in 5:33.
Wives, be subordinate to your husbands as is proper in the Lord.

being subordinate to each other out of respect for Christ

*Eph. 5:22*

<ναί γυναικες τοις ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ως τῷ κυρίῳ

wives, to your own husbands as to the Lord,

From even the first verse we can perceive significant differences. We have already noted that Col. 3:18 is a complete sentence, while Eph. 5:21 continues the sentence that begins in 5:17 and ends in 5:24. The conventional exhortation directed at wives to be subordinate to their husbands in Col. 3:18 is rewritten as an exhortation to mutual subordination in Eph. 5:21. Grammatically and syntactically, however, there is more at work here as we observe that the second person imperative ὑποτάσσεσθε of Col. 3:18, directed only at wives, is replaced by the masculine plural participle ὑποτασσόμενοι in Eph. 5:21, which, as we saw above, is a transitional verse introducing the marital code. Again, this is significant because the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι requires either a masculine subject or a subject of mixed-gender. Grammatically, it cannot refer to wives alone. It must then require husbands as well, since they, too, are addressed in the marital code. To the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι (“being subordinate”) the author adds the masculine plural ἀλλήλοις (“to each other”). As we observe the change from Αἱ γυναικες, ὑποτάσσεσθε (“wives, be subordinate”) in Col. 3:18 to ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“being subordinate to each other”) in Eph. 5:21, it is worth noting that nowhere in the marital code of Ephesians is the imperative verb ὑποτάσσεσθε (“be subordinate”) ever used for
wives, even in the verses addressed to wives in Eph. 5:22-24,33. Also noteworthy is the replacement of ἐν κυρίῳ, “in the Lord,” in Col. 3:18 with ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, “out of respect for Christ.” Besides, as we have seen, creating an *inclusio* with Eph. 5:33, the expression ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ also lends a Christocentric emphasis to the idea of mutual subordination. It will also introduce the analogy with Christ/husband and Church/wife which will dominate the marital code, as will become apparent in the discussion below.

While Eph. 5:21 rewrites Col. 3:18 in a way to introduce the idea of mutual marital subordination, Eph. 5:22 takes up and develops further the exhortation to wives from Col. 3:18. However, notice that Eph. 5:22 lacks any verb or participle: ἡ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ ("wives to your own husbands as to the Lord"). Without a verb or participle, v. 22 must therefore grammatically rely on that supplied by the expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ("being subordinate to each other") in 5:21. In this way, the author deftly links the exhortation to wives in 5:22 to that of mutual subordination in 5:21. In other words, the author of Ephesians retains from Colossians the traditional idea of wifely subordination but, by introducing the marital code with the masculine plural expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις, adds the rather unconventional idea of *mutual* marital subordination—"being subordinate to each other"—and places this idea first, before the statement about wifely subordination. To put it another way, yes, wives are to be subordinate to their husbands, but husbands, too, are to be subordinate to their wives.

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25 See the discussion in Chapter Three of the textual variants of Eph. 5:22 and the arguments offered for dismissing them as later scribal additions.
Other changes are made as well to rewrite Col. 3:18. We have seen how ἐν κυρίῳ in Col. 3:18 becomes ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ in Eph. 5:21. But the longer expression in Colossians, ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν κυρίῳ (“as is fitting in the Lord”), becomes replaced again in Eph. 5:22 by ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ (“as to the Lord”), further developing the analogy between Christ/husband and Church/wife that will be developed in the rest of the marital code.

Unlike Col. 3:18, two verses (5:23-24) are added to offer an explanation for a wife’s subordination to her husband: 1) because a husband is “head of his wife as also Christ is head of the Church,” and 2) as the Church is subordinate to Christ, so also are wives to their husbands “in everything.” The idea of a husband as the “head” of his wife is not found in Colossians, nor does Colossians says anything about the Church as subordinate to Christ. Christ, however, is referred to as “the head of the body, the Church” in Col. 1:18 and the “head of every ruler and authority” in Col. 2:19, while readers are warned against “not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body . . . grows with a growth from God.” In Eph. 5:23, the author creatively combines the idea of Christ’s headship of the Church in Col. 1:18 and Col. 2:19 with 1 Cor. 11:3 (Paul’s statement about a husband being “head” of his wife) and 2 Cor. 11:2 (the idea from Paul that Christ is the “husband” of the baptized). Then the author goes on to describe Christ’s headship in terms of being “savior of his body,” an idea which will be further developed in vv. 25-32 where Christ is portrayed as serving and caring for the Church, his bride-body, as her loving husband. While Christ’s headship is offered as the model for a husband’s role as

26 Interestingly, while the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ is ultimately derived from Paul in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, Paul nowhere refers to Christ as the “head” of his body, the Church. This is an idea first found in Colossians and later incorporated into Ephesians.
“head of his wife,” in the same way, the Church-bride’s subordination to the headship of Christ is offered as the model for wives, as we see in v. 24. Christ’s headship thus becomes a predominant image in this section addressing wives. These additional verses (Eph. 5:23-24) composed by the author in rewriting Col. 3:18 have the following result: a) they intensify the Christocentric emphasis already begun in 5:21, b) they qualify a husband’s headship by holding Christ up as the standard and model for a husband’s love, and c) they re-define the relationship between husband and wife with the analogy of Christ and the Church.

Following the instruction to wives is the exhortation to husbands to love their wives in Col. 3:19 and Eph. 5:25-33a. With but a quick glance it is immediately apparent that Col. 3:19, one verse with only ten words, becomes elaborated into nine verses with one hundred fifty words in Ephesians:

**Col. 3:19**

Oι άνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναίκας καὶ μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτάς.

**Eph. 5:25-33**

25 Oι άνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναίκας,

καθὼς καὶ ο Χριστὸς ἦγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἐαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς, 26 ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὑδάτος ἐν ρήματι, 27 ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἐαυτῷ ἐνδόξου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἐξουσιάν στίλον ἢ ρυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα ἡ ἁγία καὶ ἁμομοιόμενος. 28 ὁ άνδρος ὅφειλος καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναίκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα. ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὴν ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκα ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ. 29 Οὐδεὶς γὰρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν, καθὼς
καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναίκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστὶν· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. πλὴν καὶ ύμεῖς οἱ καθ’ ἕνα, ἐκαστὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα οὕτως ἀγαπάτω ὡς ἑαυτόν, ἥ δὲ γυνὴ ἰνα φοβῆται τὸν ἄνδρα.

Col. 3:19

Husbands, love your wives
and do not treat them harshly.

Eph. 5:25-33

25 Husbands, love your wives

just as also Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by means of the bath of water in [the] word, so that he might present the Church to himself in glory, without a spot or a wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should likewise love their own wives as their own bodies. The one who loves his own wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own flesh but nurtures and tenderly cares for it, just as also Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body. For this reason, a man will leave behind father and mother and will cleave to his wife and the two will be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I am speaking in regard to Christ
We have seen that the section addressed to husbands is the longest in the entire household code of Ephesians, an indication of its importance and significance. The single command in Col. 3:19 to husbands to love their wives is multiplied by four references (three of these as re-stated commands) to the obligation of husbands to love their wives (5:25; 5:28, twice; 5:33a). The negative command in Col. 3:19b, καὶ μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτὰς (“and do not treat them harshly”), is eliminated and replaced by both an extended discussion about Christ’s love for his Church-Bride as his body and a second exhortation to husbands to love their wives, nurturing and caring for them as “their own body”;

indeed, “the one who loves his wife loves himself.” Just as Christ is “one flesh” with the Church (Eph. 5:30-32), so a husband is “one flesh” with his wife (Eph. 5:28-29,31), and “no one ever hates his own flesh” (Eph. 5:29). Genesis 2:24 is cited and applied not only to the union between husband and wife but to the “great mystery” of the union between Christ and his Church. Closing the marital code in Eph. 5:33 is a final exhortation to husbands, “individually, each one” to “love his wife as himself,” with a parallel exhortation given to “the wife that she respect her husband.”

Suffused throughout the marital code of Ephesians is the analogy between Christ/husband and Church/wife. We saw how in the exhortation to wives in Eph. 5:22-24, the predominant image is of Christ as the head of the Church and “savior of his body.” As the Church is subordinate to Christ, her head, so, too, are wives exorted to be
subordinate to their “head,” their husband. Similarly, in the exhortation to husbands, the predominant image is that of the Church as the body of Christ. The analogy is unmistakable and is emphasized in different ways so that its message is not lost: as Christ the head nourishes, cares for, and lovingly serves his body, the Church—as “savior of his body”—so, too, must a husband nourish, care for, and lovingly serve his “own flesh” as its head. Here “his own flesh” is his wife, understood in a way parallel to the Church as Christ’s body and bride. In this way, while Ephesians adds the idea of a husband as “head of his wife,” a husband’s headship is qualified and re-described in terms of his love and care for his wife after the pattern of Christ’s own love and care for his bride, the Church.

As we compare and contrast the two marital codes, it becomes apparent that in the rewritten marital code of Ephesians, the center and the focus of the relationship between wife and husband is not a wife’s submission, or even a husband’s headship, although only Ephesians states that a husband is “head of his wife as Christ is head of his Church.” Nor is the center and focus of their relationship a husband’s love, although the author of Ephesians lays great emphasis on a husband’s love. Instead, in stark contrast to Colossians, from the very first verse, the Christocentric character of the marital code of Ephesians stands out. We saw above how it begins with the exhortation to mutual subordination ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, “out of respect for Christ” (5:21). This respect for Christ is mirrored in the respect that a wife gives her husband “as to the Lord” (5:22,33), while her husband, in turn, is repeatedly reminded that he must treat his wife with the same love, service, and care with which Christ treats the Church (5:25-33). In this rewritten marital code, the center and focus of the husband-wife relationship can be said to be
Christ. Indeed, throughout Eph. 5:21-33, Christ is mentioned for a total of ten times. The Church is mentioned nine times, while wives and husbands are each mentioned eight times.27

Summary and Conclusions

The dependence of Ephesians upon Colossians explains the similarities between the household codes of the two epistles, i.e., their shared sequence and wording. Nonetheless, there are even more striking differences between them. First and foremost is the way the author of Ephesians rewrites the command to wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 into an exhortation to mutual subordination in Eph. 5:21, grammatically linking the exhortation to wives in Eph. 5:22 to this exhortation to mutual subordination in v. 21. We have also seen how, whereas the household code of Col. 3:18-4:1 seems to be an interruption, breaking the continuity between the discussion on gratitude, thanksgiving, and prayer that begins with Col. 3:15 and ends with 4:4, the household code of Eph. 5:21-6:9 is carefully woven into the rest of the epistle; indeed, it further develops on the micro level of the household the broader discussion throughout the epistle on proper behavior for those who are members of the larger “household of God.” Further, whereas the emphasis in the household code of Colossians is on the proper behavior of slaves, the emphasis of Eph. 5:21-6:9 is on the duty of husbands to love their wives. Indeed, while retaining Colossians’ command to husbands to love their wives, the author repeats it multiple times and expands it (Col. 3:19/Eph. 5:25,28,33).

27 This calculation also includes personal pronouns used in reference to either Christ, the Church, husbands, and wives.
We also saw how, in rewriting the household code of Colossians, the author of Ephesians adds other new elements, such as the idea of a husband’s headship, borrowed from 1 Cor. 11:3, and the idea of Christ as bridegroom of the Church, borrowed from 2 Cor. 11:2. Taking these two images of husband as “head” and Christ as bridegroom, the author then introduces and develops the analogy with the relationship between Christ and the Church. With this analogy, the author holds up as the model of the husband-wife relationship Christ’s own love for the Church, manifested in the care and nurturance he gives his Church-bride who is also his body. In this way, the traditional idea of a wife’s subordination is acknowledged yet re-interpreted, while the equally traditional idea of a husband’s headship is also reinterpreted with the analogy of Christ’s relationship with the Church as its head. With all its changes and additions, it appears that the marital code of Eph. 5:21-33 is something like a commentary on Colossians 3:18-19, written to explain, clarify, and even revise with a delicately stated and nuanced insistence on the mutual subordination that should exist in a truly Christian partnership.

All these considerations beg the question “why?” Why are there such significant differences in regard to the marital codes between two epistles that seem to be in other respects so similar? Colossians 4:5 may offer a clue: “Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.” This cautionary statement is included in a series of final cautionary statements as part of the epistle’s conclusion where the audience is encouraged to “keep alert” (Col. 4:2), to pray that God will “open a door for the word” for which Paul is in prison (Col. 4:3), and to speak graciously so as to “know how to answer everyone” (Col. 4:6). Margaret Y. MacDonald sees these cautionary statements as
hinting at some tension between the “insiders,” the epistle’s Christian audience, and “outsiders.” MacDonald interprets the warnings of Col. 4:2-6 as “an attempt to offer guidance in light of the beginning of problems,” i.e., the increasing antagonism against Christians which is known to have surfaced in the early second century. Similarly, MacDonald suggests that the household code of Col. 3:18-4:1 “may well represent an attempt” to soften any opposition, or potential opposition, to the Christian message. In other words, just as with the very obvious apologetic motive involved with the exhortation to wifely subordination in 1 Peter 3:1-17 and Titus 2:2-10, MacDonald believes that there may be a similar apologetic function to the household code of Colossians.

This may also explain the delicately stated wording that we see in Eph. 5:21-22. Why was the author of Ephesians so careful and delicate when revising Col. 3:18? There are various ways to answer this question, none of which are mutually exclusive. Apologetic reasons may be at work here, too, just as in Colossians and 1 Peter and Titus. This may explain why the author inserts a rephrased Col. 4:5 in the sentence preceding the household code: “Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16). The reference to

28 Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 175.

29 It is not accident that the household code of 1 Pet. 3 is placed within an extended discussion on how to behave in the face of unjust persecution. Wives in particular are instructed to be subordinate to their husbands “so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives’ conduct when they see the purity and reverence of your lives” (1 Pet. 3:1-2). For a discussion of the household code of 1 Peter, see Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*.

30 Notice the very apologetic motive offered in Titus 2:8: “then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.”

31 See note 11 above.
“evil days” may also suggest some opposition to the nascent Christian movement. At the same time, it is reasonable to presume that the author likely anticipated that any revisions made to traditional Greco-Roman rules for household management would be met with some resistance; without question, the idea of mutual subordination in v. 21 for married partners would stretch the edges of Greco-Roman convention.32

All this being said, there may be yet another reason for the author’s delicate and carefully nuanced language. The composition of Ephesians is not that distant from Colossians in time or space. Both are thought by a majority of scholars to be products of a post-Pauline Christian movement in Asia Minor. Consequently, there is no reason to presume that the author of Colossians was unknown to the author of Ephesians. Hence, the careful language may also suggest that the author of Ephesians knew personally and respected those who were either responsible for or in support of the composition of Colossians and its inclusion into a collection of Paul’s letters published sometime after his death. They may even have been the author’s own teachers and mentors. Clearly, the way the author incorporates so much similar material from Colossians suggests a respect and value for many of the ideas in the epistle. Nonetheless, the differences between the two epistles, as we have seen here with the marital code, suggest the author’s discomfort on some level with some passages in Colossians. As we have seen, the author had a different perspective from what we see in Col. 3:18 and, after a careful reading and study of Paul’s original letter collection, felt that some adaptations and developments were

32 See the discussion in Chapter Three on vv. 21 and 22.
necessary to communicate Paul’s message to a new generation of Gentile converts some years after the initial publication of Colossians.33

By now, it should be clear that the differences between the two household codes are significant enough that the thoughtful reader should be wary about reading Eph. 5:21-33 in the light of Col. 3:18-19 or conflating these two very different passages as if they were written by the same person. To conflate them would mute the distinctive voice of the author of Ephesians. Not only are the two epistles not written by the same author but they each offer a different perspective on how gender relations were understood in early Christian communities. Colossians offers a very traditional perspective, one in keeping with what we see in the Pastoral Epistles34 and 1 Peter 3:1-2, as well as the Greco-Roman world in general. The perspective in Ephesians, however, reflects what the archaeological record is beginning to tell us about the changes going on in the first century CE, particularly in regard to how women’s roles were understood.35 In other words, the rewritten marital code of Eph. 5:21-33 suggests that even among late first century CE Pauline Christian communities there were differences in perspective and points of view

33 See the discussion in Chapter Five on Paul’s letter collection and the author’s familiarity with Paul’s undisputed letters.

34 1 Tim. 2:11-15; Titus 2:1-10. However, notice the apologetic motive in Titus 2:8: “then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.”

regarding proper gender roles and relations, and these differences in perspective likely reflect differences in local practice, custom, and culture.\textsuperscript{36}

The rewritten marital code of Eph. 5:21-33 may also reflect, however, not only a different perspective from that of Col. 3:18-19, but also an entirely different interpretation of Paul’s own teaching on marital relations, one that differed from that of the author of Colossians. In Chapters Three and Four we will examine in a more detailed and in-depth way the author’s perspectives and theological developments through an exegetical study of the entire marital code, Eph. 5:21-33. While looking for the author’s own meaning, we will also look at how the author creatively uses material from Paul’s undisputed letters, the Septuagint, and Hellenistic Jewish tradition. In Chapter Five we will examine what Paul himself has to say about women’s proper roles in his undisputed letters while in Chapter Six we will look at how the author appropriates, adapts, and develops material from Paul while composing the marital code. All this we will do so as to hear better the author’s own voice and to highlight in greater relief the author’s careful revisions to Col. 3:18-19.

\textsuperscript{36} See Bruce Winter, \textit{Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).
CHAPTER THREE
AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF EPHESIANS 5:21-24

21 ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, 22 αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ, 23 ὅτι ἀνήρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτὸς δὲσωτήρ τοῦ σώματος. 24 ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί.

. . . being subordinate to each other out of respect for Christ, wives to your own husbands as to the Lord (because a husband is head of his wife as also Christ is head of his Church--he is savior of his Body), but just as the Church is subordinate to Christ, so also [ought] wives [be] to their husbands in everything.

Introduction

In the previous chapter we looked at the relationship between the household codes of Ephesians and Colossians, particularly the relationship between their shared marital codes. We saw how the author of Ephesians rewrites the marital code of Colossians and that, to read Eph. 5:21-33 in the light of Col. 3:18-4:1 as if they were both the same or written by the same author is, in effect, to silence the voice of the author of Ephesians and to blur the author’s distinctive perspective on proper gender relations in a Christian household. In this chapter and the following, we will look for the deeper meaning of Eph. 5:21-33 in order to understand better the author’s own unique perspective. We will do this with an exegetical study, first with a structural and syntactical analysis of Eph. 5:21-33 both as a whole and in its smaller segments, and then, in a verse-by-verse discussion which follows, by making observations regarding key words and expressions. We will look at how these key words and expressions are used in the rest of the epistle, as well as
in the obvious sources for the author, i.e., Paul’s undisputed letters, Colossians, and the Septuagint (LXX). Additionally, whenever helpful, we will also look at how the same words, expressions, or ideas are used in the broader Hellenistic Jewish and Greco-Roman world contemporaneous to the author. Because the passage is long, we will divide it according to its natural division, so that the present chapter will focus on both the structure of the overall passage and Eph. 5:21-24, the introduction to the marital code and the exhortation to wives. Likewise, the following chapter will focus on Eph. 5:25-33, the exhortation to husbands and the marital code’s conclusion. All of the above will be done in order to highlight points of similarity and difference so that the author’s own distinctive voice may become clearer and more audible.

A Structural and Syntactical Analysis of Eph. 5:21-33

As an introduction or “springboard” into the exegetical discussion below, we will look at Eph. 5:21-33 as a whole, examining its overall structure and syntax, as well as the structure and syntax of the different components of the marital code. A simple translation will be provided while reserving for the exegetical analysis which follows a more detailed discussion of important words and key ideas of each verse.

Structurally, Eph. 5:21-33 can be divided into four major segments: A, B, C, A'.

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1 From the outset, it must be acknowledged that there are as many ways to structure this passage as there are scholars who comment on it. See Markus Barth’s review of the different ways that scholars have structured the marital code in his Ephesians (2 vols.; AB 34-34A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), I:651-655. For more recent structural studies of Eph. 5:21-33, see Gregory Dawes, The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 91-93, and John Paul Heil, Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 239-255. Like other scholars before them, both Dawes and Heil each offer their own assessment of the passage’s structure without much agreement over how the passage is to be understood structurally. The passage is so rich theologically that scholars structure it according to the particular theological point which they wish to emphasize.
(See Appendix B.) The first segment, A, is an exhortation to all believers for mutual subordination “out of respect for Christ” (literally, “fear,” see discussion in the exegetical analysis below). Segment B is an exhortation directed at wives (vv. 22-24) while segment C is an exhortation directed at husbands (vv. 25-32). Concluding the pericope is A', the summary exhortation of v. 33 given to both husbands and wives. Looking at the passage as a whole, we can observe a correspondence between A and A'. The idea of respect (literally, “fear,”) both begins and ends the pericope, so that A (v. 21) and A' (v. 33) together form an *inclusio*. There is a second correspondence between A and A' in that, within the context of the household code, both are directed to husband and wife together: A exhorts the married couple to mutual subordination while A' specifies how that mutual subordination is to take shape, namely that a husband love his wife as himself and that a wife respect her husband.

In regard to segment A (v. 21), we saw in the discussion on the comparison and contrast with Col. 3:18 how this verse links what comes before with what comes after, continuing the sentence that begins with 5:17 and ends with 5:24. Also, as we have seen, v. 21 begins with the masculine plural participle ὑποτασσόμενοι (“being subordinate”) followed by the dative pronoun ἀλλήλοις (“to each other”): ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“being subordinate to each other”). Much more will be said about this expression in the exegetical discussion below, but for now we can observe that, as a transitional verse, segment A serves two functions, the first to summarize the preceding discussion on the proper relationships that are to exist among members of the Church (i.e., mutual

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2 The Greek text used in Appendix B is based on the earliest Greek manuscripts. See the exegetical discussion in this chapter and the next for a discussion of the Greek text.
subordination), and the second to introduce the household code (i.e., mutual subordination). In the context of the first major segment of the household code, the exhortations to wives and husbands in Eph. 5:21-33, the expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“being subordinate to each other”) becomes an exhortation to mutual marital subordination. In fact, it is composed in such a way as to introduce the marital code so that what follows in vv. 22-33 serves both to explain what mutual marital subordination is to look like and to offer reasons and motivation for it. From the very beginning, the readers are told that mutual subordination is to be offered to each other ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, literally, “in [the] fear of Christ.” Verse 21 is not a complete sentence by itself, however, and is linked grammatically both to what precedes it in vv. 17-20 and to what follows in vv. 22-24 (segment B).

Segment B (vv. 22-24), the exhortation directed at wives, is grammatically an extension of the expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“being subordinate to each other”) in v. 21. It also completes the sentence begun in v. 17. There are two components to segment B, the first being v. 22, the exhortation given to wives to be subordinate to their husbands, and the second being vv. 23-24, the explanations for a wife’s subordination. Verse 22, however, is without verb or participle, and must therefore grammatically depend on what comes before it in v. 21, the masculine plural participle ὑποτασσόμενοι (“being subordinate”) in the participial clause ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ (“being subordinate to each other out of respect for Christ”). By linking v. 22 grammatically to v. 21, the author thereby links the subordination of wives to the mutual subordination of Christians, a subordination that extends even into married partnerships. As we will see in the exegetical discussion below, a wife’s subordination to her husband
was the traditional expectation throughout the Mediterranean world of the author’s time.
However, a husband’s mutual subordination to his wife stretches the edges of cultural
convention. Perhaps for this reason, in segment B the author follows the language of
mutual subordination in v. 21 with the more culturally acceptable language of a
husband’s headship and a wife’s subordination in vv. 22-24. Nonetheless, the chiastic
structure of verses 23-24 emphasizes the Christocentric quality of the relationship
between husband and wife where Christ as “savior of the body” takes up the central focus
of the exhortation to wives and its explanation:

\[ \begin{align*}
(a) & \quad \text{ὅτι ἄνήρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς} \\
(b) & \quad \text{ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας}, \\
(c) & \quad \text{αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος} \\
(b') & \quad \text{ἄλλα ως ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ}, \\
(a') & \quad \text{οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντὶ}. \\
\end{align*} \]

Verses 23a-24b form a chiasm with v. 23c as its central point. Between (a) and (a'),
which use traditional language about a husband’s headship and the wife’s subordination
to that headship, are (b) and (b') describing the parallel relationship between Christ and
the Church: Christ is the head of the Church (b), and the Church is subordinate to Christ
(b'). At the center is v. 23c, or (c), “he is savior of the Body,” a reference to how Christ
exercises his headship of the Church. To put it another way, v. 23, which begins with the
subordinating conjunction ὅτι (“because,” “since”), offers a traditional explanation for the
wife’s subordination to her husband: he is her “head.” Yet immediately a husband’s
headship is qualified by the comparative subordinating conjunction ὡς (“as”) and the
adverb καὶ (“also”), with a statement about Christ’s own headship of the Church: ὡς καὶ
ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας (“as also Christ [is] head of his Church”). Christ’s
headship is then equated with his being “savior of his Body,” a reference to the Church as
the Body of Christ, an important theme for this epistle, as well as for the marital code (vv. 30-32). The rest of the passage will describe Christ’s headship as “savior of his Body” in terms of his care for and service to his Church-Bride (vv. 26-27), even laying down his life for her as his most extreme act of love (vv. 25b). Thus, with the expression ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας (“as also Christ [is] head of his Church”), a husband’s headship is qualified and, as the rest of the passage will explain, is to be characterized by loving and humble service after the pattern of Christ’s own extreme of love in his role as head of the Church and “savior of the Body.” In the same way, as indicated by the two coordinating conjunctions ἀλλὰ ὡς (“but as”) and the adverbs οὕτως καὶ (“so also”) in v. 24, wives’ subordination to their husbands must imitate the Church’s subordination to Christ: “but as the Church is subordinate to Christ, so also [ought] wives [be] to their husbands in everything.”

Following the discussion of a wife’s subordination to her husband in segment B, segment C describes the character of a husband’s reciprocity with a heavy and repeated emphasis on his obligation to love and care for his wife after the pattern of Christ’s own sacrificial love and tender care for the Church. In fact, segment C is the longest segment of the entire pericope, needing eight verses to describe how a husband is to love his wife (vv. 25-32), as opposed to the three verses in segment B directed at wives. As we observed in the previous chapter, unlike the parallel command in Col. 3:19, the exhortation to husbands with which segment C begins in Eph. 5:25 is repeated with great insistence, developed and elaborated with multiple references to Christ’s love and care for the Church, as well as a citation from Scripture (v. 31) for support. Segment C can be

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3 See the discussion on vv. 25-27 in Chapter Four.
divided into three smaller components, the first being the exhortation to husbands in v. 25a, the second being vv. 25b-29c which describe Christ’s love for his Church-Bride as the model for a husband’s love for his wife, and the third being vv. 30-32 which describe the “great mystery” of Christ’s union with his Church. Following the exhortation to husbands in v. 25a, the second component of segment C, vv. 25b-29c, can be structured as follows:

(a) καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
(b) καὶ έαυτόν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς,
(c) ἵνα αὐτὴν ἐγκαθίστατο καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὑδάτος ἐν ρήματι,
(d) οὕτως οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα.

Looking at the broader structure of vv. 25b-29c, it is immediately clear that (a) (v. 25b) forms an inclusio with (a’) (v. 29c), as can be seen with the repetition of the words καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. While v. 29c is without a verb, the verb is implied, either as ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει (“nourishes and tenderly cares”) from v. 29b, or as ἠγάπησεν (“loved”) from v. 25b. Of course, given the context here, there is no doubt that the expression ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει in (b’) is offered as an explanation of how a husband loves his wife. As a matter of fact, there is a parallel between (b’) and the supreme example in (b) of love for one’s wife—Christ’s own love for his Church-Bride in v. 25c: a husband’s loving care for his wife in (b’) becomes the expression of “giving himself up
for her” after the example of Christ in (b). A similar correspondence exists between (c) and (c’), which both explain why a husband is to love his wife. The three ἵνα (“so that”) clauses of vv. 26-27 explain the purpose of Christ’s love, his “giving himself up” for his Church-Bride: so that he might sanctify her, raise her status, and ennoble her. Christ’s great value and esteem for the Church is offered as the supreme example of a husband who, in loving his wife, loves himself (c’). By implication, a husband who loves his wife as himself treats his wife as Christ treats his Church-Bride in showing her honor, esteem, and great value. To treat her in any other way would be equivalent to “hating one’s own flesh” (v. 29a), which would be absurd.

Just as we saw in vv. 23-24, here, too, there is a chiastic structure formed around a central idea, the re-stated exhortation to husbands in (d): “in the same way, so ought husbands to love their wives as they love their bodies.” The verses surrounding this central idea, above and below, explain and develop its meaning. Above the chiasm formed by (d) is the example of how Christ loves his Church-Bride in (b) and (c), while below the chiasm is the rationale given for why husbands ought to love their wives in (b’) and (c’). The adverb οὕτως (“in the same way”) refers back to v. 25b, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν (“just as also Christ loves the Church”) and v. 25c, καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς (“and gave himself up for her”). In “the same way,” then, as Christ loved the Church, as Christ gave himself up for the Church, husbands ought to love their wives. Yet verse 28 adds an additional element, ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα, “as their own bodies.” The matching sequence of these two expressions τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας and τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα, both accusative direct objects of the infinitive ἀγαπᾶν, each with a definite article followed by the genitive reflexive pronoun ἑαυτῶν “fronted for
emphasis,  

indicates that both are to be read as parallel and synonymous, linked together by the conjunction ὡς, which here is not comparative but deictic, functioning as the grammatical equivalent of a mathematical “equal sign” and indicating identity: τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας (“their own wives”) = τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα (“their own bodies”). This anticipates verses 28c-31 with their repeated emphasis on the unity of husband and wife as “one flesh,” a unity which must reflect the “great mystery” which the author sees in the profound unity of Christ and his body, the Church. Completing this unit is v. 29c, a re-statement of v. 25b, yet another insistence that a husband is to love his wife to Christ’s own self-sacrificing extreme, upholding her dignity, honoring, esteeming, and valuing her, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, “as also Christ the Church.”

Just as we saw in vv. 23-24 and then again in vv. 25b-29, the final unit of segment C, vv. 30-32, similarly offers a chiastic structure centered on a main point:

(e) 30 ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.

(f) 31a ἀντὶ τοῦτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος πατέρα καὶ μητέρα
   31b καὶ προσκολληθῆσαι πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ,
   31c καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.

(e′) 32a τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν.
   32b ἔγω δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

Here the central point is v. 31, a citation from Gen. 2:24. Its Christological and ecclesiological re-interpretation is introduced by v. 30 and is summarized in v. 32. There is a correspondence between (e), “because we are members of his body,” and (e′), “This mystery is great. I am speaking of Christ and his Church” in that the “great mystery” of

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5 Dawes, The Body in Question, 97. See also the extended discussion on v. 28 in Chapter Three.
(e) is the union—the forming of “one flesh”—with Christ as “members of his body,” stated in (e). Central to the “great mystery” is the scriptural support taken from the citation of Gen. 2:24, a reference to the union between husband and wife. Yet in this new context provided by the analogy of Christ/Husband and Church/Bride, what was originally a statement explaining the reason for human marriage (Gen. 2:24) becomes an insight into Christ’s profound union with the Church: Christ is the one who “cleaves to his wife,” the Church, and who forms “one flesh” with her. Accordingly, the baptized, individually and communally, as members of the Church are literally incorporated into Christ, thereby forming “one flesh” with him.

Finally, with the summary found in A’ (v. 33), we come to the conclusion of the marital code:

\[\text{A’33 πλὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ καθ’ ἑνα, ἔκαστος τὴν ἐαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ὡς ἐαυτόν, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἵνα φοβῆται τὸν ἄνδρα.}\]

We have already seen how this concluding segment corresponds with segment A above, first by its *inclusio* with the idea of “fear” and secondly in the way it addresses both married partners. In segment A’, there is a third repetition of the command to husbands to love their wives, but unlike the first two such commands in v. 25a and v. 28a, here there is an emphasis on “each one, individually,” with a corresponding singular wife as object, as opposed to the plural “wives” in the previous exhortations. Likewise, the exhortation to wives is singular, “let the wife,” as opposed to v. 22, αἱ γυναῖκες, “wives.” However, unlike the indirect exhortation, “let the wife,” husbands are addressed directly with the second person plural ὑμεῖς. Further, the construction ὡς τὰ ἐαυτῶν σῶματα (“as his own body”) is used here with ἐαυτόν,
“himself,” further reinforcing the link between “wife,” “body,” and “oneself” in v. 28. In other words, although the command to love one’s wife as oneself in v. 33 reflects the language of Lev. 19:18, the command to love one’s neighbor as oneself, it also reinforces the teaching in vv. 28c-29 that to love one’s wife is to love oneself.6 Once again, as we saw in the extended exhortation to husbands in vv. 25-32 above, the exhortation to husbands here in v. 33 is longer than that given to wives. In fact, the exhortation to “the wife” is hardly a command,7 and uses ἵνα plus the subjunctive, rather than the imperative form, unlike the exhortation to “each” husband. Here the respect (literally, “fear”) that the wife gives her husband reflects what all believers as members of the Church and members of Christ’s body are to give to Christ in v. 21. This is in keeping with the analogy between the wife and the Church: the profound respect that the Church gives to Christ a wife ought to give to her husband.

As we look at the structure of Eph. 5:21-33 as a whole, we notice a carefully written passage framed by an inclusio and composed of three chiasms. The inclusio at the beginning and end of the passage addresses married partners, with the concluding exhortations in v. 33 reiterating the exhortation of v. 21 and summarizing the exhortations to wives and husbands in vv. 22-32. There is an exhortation to wives in v. 22, followed by a chiasm, and an exhortation to husbands in v. 25, followed by two chiasms. The central idea of each of the three chiasms has to do with the concept of “body,” or of “flesh” as synonymous with “body”: Christ is “savior of his body” (v. 23c); so should husbands love their wives as their own bodies (v. 28); indeed, a man leaves

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6 Andrew T. Lincoln, Ephesians (WBC 42; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 384.
7 Barth contends that it is more a wish than an imperative (648).
father and mother and cleaves to his wife to form one flesh with her (v. 31). In other words, husbands should love their wives, too, as Christ who is “savior of his body” loves his Church-Bride, as Christ who is “one flesh” with his Church-Bride cares for her. When taken together, the emphasis of the three chiasms of this passage is not on a husband’s headship but, instead, on a husband’s body—the body he shares with his wife in forming “one flesh” with her, the body he is to nurture and tenderly care for, just as Christ the Church.

Much, much more must be said about this passage and its meaning. Thus, in the exegetical study which follows, each segment of the structure of the passage will be reviewed as a springboard to a more detailed analysis of each key word and expression for each verse, beginning with the introduction to the marital code in Eph. 5:21 and the exhortation to wives in Eph. 5:22-24.

**An Exegetical Analysis of Eph. 5:21-24**

\[5:21 \text{ ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,} \]

\[5:22 \text{ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ,} \]

\[5:23 \text{ ὥς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας,} \]

\[5:24 \text{ ὅτι ἂν ἕστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς ·} \]

\[5:25 \text{ ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ,} \]

\[5:26 \text{ οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντὶ.} \]

\[5:21: \text{ ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ χριστοῦ} \]

... *being subordinate to each other out of respect for Christ*

As we saw in the discussion on structure, v. 21 (segment A above) not only introduces the household code but it also continues the sentence that first begins in 5:17:
“So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (NRSV). Thus, grammatically v. 21 serves as a link between what comes before in 5:15ff to what comes after in 5:22-6:9. In fact, the present middle participle ὑποτασσόμενοι (from ὑποτάσσω, “to place or order under”), “being subordinate,” or “subject,” or “submissive,” is dependent upon the second person plural present passive imperative verb πληροῦσθε in the preceding clause πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι (“be filled with the Spirit”) of 5:18, and thus grammatically cannot stand apart from what comes before it. We have already seen how ὑποτασσόμενοι is the final participle in a list of participles in vv. 17-21 which are grammatically dependent upon πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι (“be filled with the Spirit”): λαλοῦντες, ᾦδοντες, ψάλλοντες, εὐχαριστοῦντες, ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“speaking, singing hymns, singing psalms, giving thanks, being subordinate to each other”). All of these participles except for this last, ὑποτασσόμενοι (“being subordinate”), suggest a context of liturgy and worship. By reshaping the command to wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 into a command to mutual subordination in v. 21 and placing it within a context suggesting a liturgical gathering of the household church, the author implies that how Christians pray together is also how they ought to live. Right worship should lead to right relationship. Here right worship and right relationship are described in terms of mutual subordination—ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις. There are no vertical relationships in the

8 Lincoln quite rightly suggests that 5:15-6:9 should be viewed as a unit, both grammatically and rhetorically (338).

9 From ὑποτάσσω, which as an active verb connotes to “place under” or “order under,” hence, to “subordinate.” See the discussion of ὑποτασσόμενοι as translated variously as either a middle participle (“submitting or subjecting yourselves”) or a passive participle (to “be subject”) in Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 716. The BDAG takes ὑποτασσόμενοι as a passive participle (1042.1.b.b), as do Max Zerwick S.J and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament (5th Revised Edition; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), 589.
household church in view here. Instead, all the members are to be mutually subordinate to each other out of “respect for Christ.” Indeed, mutual subordination characterizes those who are “filled with the Spirit.”

While v. 21 is part of a longer sentence beginning with 5:17, the instructions in Eph. 5:17ff form a part of the larger paraenesis with which the second half of the epistle begins in 4:1-2 in which Paul the prisoner begs his audience to “lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.” The way Christians live and relate with each other is supposed to be different from the larger Gentile culture, as we see in 4:17: “Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds” (NRSV). This difference from the dominant Gentile culture stands out even more sharply when we observe that v. 21 (segment A), with its participial expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις, is also connected grammatically with what follows in 5:22ff (segment B); indeed, just as ὑποτασσόμενοι cannot be separated from what comes before it, neither can it be separated from what comes after it in vv. 22-24, as we will see below. In this way, by grammatically linking v. 21 with both the paraenesis which comes before it and the household code which it introduces, the author makes the household code an integral part of the paraenetical instructions of the broader epistle. When seen in this light, the implication becomes clear: the Christian household, the domestic church, is also to be different from the dominant Gentile culture. By introducing the household code in this way, the author instructs the readers that relations in the Christian household are to be viewed as an extension of the “Spirit-filled” relations expected of Christians within the Church, as members of the Church and as men and
women who gather to pray together, “speaking, singing hymns and psalms, and giving thanks” (5:19-20). The household code of Ephesians must therefore be read within the light of Eph. 4:1-2,17 and the larger paraenesis as a whole. This means that relationships within a Christian household must be characterized by humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love (4:2). In other words, vertical relationships of unilateral subordination, which the author views as having no place among Christians, is how the Gentiles live, not how “spirit-filled” believers in Christ are supposed to live.10

It is therefore significant that the participial expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις is grammatically masculine. As such, it can modify either a masculine noun or a noun of mixed-gender, but cannot modify the feminine plural noun “wives” referred to in v. 22. Yet, as we will see in the discussion on v. 22, there is no verb or participle in v. 22 which grammatically modifies “wives,” thereby making v. 22 grammatically dependent on ὑποτασσόμενοι in v. 21. In other words, husbands must also be included grammatically in the implied subject of the masculine plural middle participle ὑποτασσόμενοι.11 Using very delicately and carefully nuanced language, the author insists in a subtle way that mutual submission should exist between all the members of the Christian community; this includes the Christian household in general and, specifically, even the head of the household who functions as husband, father, and master. In particular, because v. 21

10 As Margaret MacDonald observes, reading 5:21 in relation to what comes before it “brings out the fact that submitting to one another is understood as central to a way of life that sets believers apart from the Gentiles” (Colossians and Ephesians, 325).

11 Contrast this with the feminine form of the same participle used in an imperatival sense in 1 Peter 3:1 and repeated as an example of the conduct of holy women in 3:5: Ὅμοιος [αἱ] γυναῖκες, ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν; οὕτως γὰρ ποτε καὶ αἱ ἁγίαι γυναῖκες αἱ ἔλεγξαν εἰς θεὸν ἐκόσμουν εαυτὰς ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν, similarly, Titus 2:5: ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν.
introduces the marital code of Eph. 5:21-33, unlike Colossians 3:18 where only wives are instructed to be subordinate, for the author of Ephesians, Christian husbands, too, are to be subordinate to their wives in the mutual subordination of Christian partners.

Underlining the idea of mutuality in a way which would cause the reader to sit up and take notice is the inclusion of the masculine plural reciprocal dative pronoun ἀλλήλοις, “to each other,” thereby making the mutual character of Christian subordination unmistakable. Again, with the placement of ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“being subordinate to each other”) as the “bridge” which grammatically introduces the instruction on household relations, the author emphasizes the teaching that the mutual subordination which is to characterize relationships among members of the Church in general (4:1-5:21) must likewise characterize the relationships in an authentically Christian household (5:21-6:9) and, in particular, in a truly Christian partnership of wife and husband (5:21-33).

It is worth noting that only here in Ephesians 5:21 do we encounter in early Christian literature a specific reference to mutual marital subordination.12 (Of course, the nature of that mutual marital subordination will be made clearer in the verses that follow.) Elsewhere in Ephesians, ὑποτάσσω is used only in reference to submission to Christ (1:22; 5:24). Yet the expression ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, literally, “in fear of Christ,”

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12 While Paul himself insists on equal conjugal rights (1 Cor. 7:3-5), he nowhere uses the expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις. (See the discussion in Chapter Five on Paul’s teaching on marriage.) In Gal. 5:13, however, Paul exhorts his audience to “become slaves to each other through love” (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις) in a spirit of true Christian freedom.

Outside the New Testament, only 1 Clement (c. 95 CE) makes any specific reference to mutual submission (2:1; 38:1), but not mutual marital submission: 1 Clement 2:1: “All of you used to be of a humble disposition, not at all pretentious, but willingly subordinating yourselves rather than requiring that others be subordinate to you” (Πάντες τε ἐταπεινοφρονεῖτε μηδὲν ἀλαζονεύομενοι ἡπτοτασσόμενοι μᾶλλον ἢ ὑποτάσσοντες); 1 Clem. 38:1: “… let each one be subject to one’s neighbor, according to the special gift bestowed upon each (ὑποτασσέσθω ἐκαστος τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ καθὼς ἐπέθη ἐν τῷ χαρίσματι αὐτοῦ).
implies that submission to Christ is precisely what is in view here as well. To be sure, while φόβος (phobos, “fear”) is generally translated as “respect,” or “reverence,” much more is involved with this word. Its lexical meaning carries the connotation of “fear, terror, dread” and it is characteristically used to describe the appropriate response of an inferior toward a superior. The word φόβος, then, in a culture where everyone was ranked as either inferior or superior in relation to another, represents the submission of a cultural inferior owed to an acknowledged superior. The expression ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, however, indicates that, for the Christian, the dominant person in a relationship—for any

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13 In general, modern translations tend to render φόβος as “reverence”: New American Bible (NAB), New English Translation (NET), New International Version (NIV), New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), New Living Translation (NLT), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), Today’s New International Version (TNIV). Older translations such as the Douay Rheims American Edition (DRA) or the King James Version (KJV), as well as translations which follow the KJV, generally translate φόβος as “fear.”

14 See Markus Barth’s extended discussion of the proper meaning of φόβος, Ephesians, 2:662-668. To add to Barth’s argument that φόβος implies more than simply reverence, worth noting is the different vocabulary used in 1 Clement 21:6 to describe the reverence Christians owe to Christ: “Let us reverence (ἐντραπῶμεν, from ἐντρέπω, “to give heed or regard to, to respect, reverence”) the Lord Jesus Christ…” In other words, had the author of Ephesians merely intended to indicate respect or reverence for Christ rather than fear (or fear of judgment), presumably another word other than φόβος could have been used here.

15 See Horst Balz, φοβέω, φοβέομαι, φόβος, TDNT 9:189-291, particularly 198ff.

16 In Paul’s own use of φόβος, we can find some helpful examples. For example, Paul tells the Roman Christians to “pay to all their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, tolls to whom tolls are due, fear (φόβον) to whom fear is due, and honor to whom honor is due,” (Rom. 13:7). In writing to the Corinthians, Paul reminds them how he first came to them, “in weakness and fear and much trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3), as if he were their inferior, and this was his way of showing them profound respect by coming to them humbly, as the least among them. Elsewhere he reminds them how they, in turn, similarly received Titus “with fear and trembling” (2 Cor. 7:15), showing Titus, their teacher in the faith, their own humble and profound respect for him. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul counsels his readers, whom he warmly addresses with the tender title of “my beloved ones,” to “work out [their] salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). Although Paul himself never uses the expression ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ (“in fear of Christ”), he does use φόβος τοῦ θεοῦ, “fear of God” (Rom 3:18), ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ, “in fear of God” (2 Cor 7:1), and τὸν φόβον τοῦ κυρίου, “fear of the Lord,” (2 Cor. 5:11). What is striking about this latter expression is its connection to Christ as Judge: “For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others” (2 Cor. 5:10-11a, NRSV).
Christian, whether husband/wife, parent/child, master/slave—is Christ. Christians are subordinate to each other precisely because they are members of Christ’s body (5:30). In other words, the subordination given to a member of Christ’s body is subordination also given to Christ himself. What is implied is the subordination owed by an inferior to a recognized superior, Christ, who alone is “over all” (1:22). Yet, as the rest of this passage will go on to emphasize, this is the same Christ who humbly stoops to serve the needs of his beloved Church. And it is the same Christ who is present in his members. In a very real sense, the dignity of each of Christ’s members is due to their belonging to Christ—Christ’s members share in his exaltation (2:6) and herein lies their shared dignity. Mutual subordination thus acknowledges the great dignity of the other members of Christ’s body. Hence, for a Christian to demand the submission of another Christian in a traditional Greco-Roman vertical relationship of superior/inferior is to deny the dignity bestowed upon the other by Christ himself. What is more, it usurps the place of Christ. Christ alone is “Lord.”

5:22: ἡ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ

wives to your own husbands as to the Lord

Again, here we see how vv. 22-24, the exhortation to wives (segment B of the

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17 Even in regard to the master-slave relationship, Christian masters (κύριοι) are reminded that they, too, have a master (κύριος), Christ, who is also the master of their slaves ἐν οὐρανοῖς, “in heaven” (6:9). (See also the discussion on κύριος in note 18 below.)

18 Ephesians uses κύριος (“Kyrios,” or “Lord”) twenty six times in all, and all of these, except for two (6:5,9a), are in reference to Christ, whether directly (with κύριος attached to “Jesus,” “Christ Jesus,” or “Jesus Christ”: 1:2,3,15,17; 3:11; 5:20; 6:23,24), or indirectly (without any reference to either “Jesus” or “Christ”: 2:21; 4:1; 4:5; 4:17; 5:8; 5:10,17,19,22; 6:1,4,7,8,9b,10,21). The use of κύριος in 6:5 and 9a are in reference to slave masters (or “lords,” in Greek, κύριοι), yet slaves are instructed to be “slaves of Christ” (6:6) and masters are warned to “act in the same way” toward their slaves as their slaves were instructed to act toward them (6:9). What is more, masters are told to give up threats and to remember that they, too, are slaves along with their own slaves to the same “Lord/Master (κύριος) in heaven” who shows no partiality.
marital code), is grammatically a continuation of the exhortation to mutual subordination in v. 21 and completes the sentence begun in v. 17:

B 22 αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ,

(a) 23 ὅτι ἄνήρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς
(b) ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας,
(c) αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος·
(b′) 24 ἄλλα ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ,
(a′) οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντὶ.

Verse 22 begins the exhortation of segment B with a direct address to wives (αἱ γυναῖκες), urging them to be subordinate to their husbands. However, in the earliest manuscripts the word “subordinate” is not used in v. 22 and must be supplied by the masculine plural participial expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“being subordinate to each other”) in v. 21. In this way, the command to wifely subordination is not directly stated, only implied. Moreover, as will become clear below, by omitting any form of the verb “subordinate,” whether as a finite verb, infinitive, or participle, in the exhortation to wives, the author links the implied command to wifely subordination in v. 22 with the exhortation to mutual subordination in v. 21.

Worthy of note is that the discussion which begins here with v. 22 specifically on the proper relationship between wives and husbands presumes that marriage is normative. As a matter of fact, there is no discussion at all in this epistle as there is in 1 Cor. 7:32-35 on the advantages of remaining unmarried so as to dedicate oneself to God entirely.19 Instead, in Ephesians, the marriage relationship, discussed in only the most ideal terms, is

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19 Those who continue to adhere to Pauline authorship of this epistle have not yet adequately explained the huge shift between the preference for a celibacy dedicated to God in 1 Corinthians 7:25-40 and the depiction of Christian marriage in Eph. 5:21-33 as the normative locus for a Christian couple to encounter Christ. See Hoehner’s list of those who favor the minority view that Paul is the real author of this epistle (9-18).
to mirror the relationship between Christ and the Church. What precisely this relationship entails, however, or the sort of ideal proposed by the author, has been a problem for interpreters (and translators, since every translation is an interpretation) since at least the early Church. The problem lies with the addition of various forms of ὑποτάσσειν ("to submit," literally, "to order under") in the majority of ancient manuscripts, including the Codex Sinaiticus (⁵), which dates to the mid fourth century CE, the Codex Alexandrinus (A), which dates to the fifth century, and the Codex Bezae (D), which dates to the fifth and sixth centuries, among many others. These manuscripts come from two different "text types" or "textual families," the Alexandrian text type (to which both ⁵ and A belong), known for its carefulness and extremely high quality, and the Western text type (to which D belongs), known for its omissions, insertions, and unusual readings. Perhaps because most manuscripts have various forms of ὑποτάσσειν ("to submit"), including manuscripts from the highly regarded Alexandrian text type, a number of commentators begin the household code with v. 22 and a command to wives to be subordinate to their husbands, rather than with v. 21 and its insistence on mutual subordination. Not surprisingly, translations both ancient and modern include in v. 22 some form of the command to wifely submission. The ease with which so many modern commentators and translations, both ancient and modern, incorporate this command into v. 22 overlooks

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20 For a list of these scholars, see note 16 in Chapter Two.

21 All the earliest translations include a command for the subordination of wives in v. 22, not found in the earliest manuscripts. This includes translations in Sahidic Coptic (for which the oldest extant copy of Ephesians dates to the fourth century); the Vulgate (late fourth century), and the Peshitta (early fifth century). In regard to modern translations, I reviewed fifteen translations in five languages to observe how Eph. 5:22 would be translated. Each one without exception included an explicitly stated command to wifely obedience, following the later manuscript tradition. The bibles reviewed were: English: CEB, ESV, NRSV, NAB, NIV, NJB, TNIV; French: BFC; German: ELB, ZUR; Italian: NVB-IEP, LND, NRV; Spanish: LBA, RVA.
the textual difficulties inherent in this verse. To begin with, along with \( \textit{N} \) and A, a number of manuscripts have the third person plural present hortatory subjunctive verb \( υποτασσέσθωσαν \), “let them [wives] be subordinate,” while others, like D, have the second person plural middle or passive imperative \( υποτάσσεσθε \) (“be subordinate”).

What is more, not only are these ancient manuscripts not in agreement as to the form of the imperative verb (whether second or third person plural), but they are not in agreement as to its placement, whether after \( \gammaυναίκες \) (“wives”) or \( \alphaνδράσιν \) (“men”). The lack of agreement in these ancient manuscripts over both the form of the imperative verb and its placement suggests that neither \( υποτασσέσθωσαν \) nor \( υποτάσσεσθε \) were present in the original text but instead are additions made by later copyists.\(^{22}\)

Further evidence that the variant commands to wifely submission in v. 22 are the additions of copyists is supplied by a handful of reliable and even earlier witnesses which lack these commands.\(^{23}\) The oldest extant witness is Papyrus 46 (P\(^{46}\)), dated to as early as the mid second century.\(^{24}\) Like \( \textit{N} \) and A, P\(^{46}\) belongs to the Alexandrian text type, yet unlike many later Alexandrian text type manuscripts, P\(^{46}\) has no direct commands to

\(^{22}\) The second person plural \( υποτάσσεσθε \) is placed after \( \gammaυναίκες \) in D, G, 1985, lect \(^{55}\), it\(^{de}\), and after \( \alphaνδράσιν \) in K, 181, 326, 614, 629, 630, 1984, syr\(^{ph}\), and Chrysostom. The third person plural imperative \( υποτασσέσθωσαν \) is placed after \( \gammaυναίκες \) in y, cop\(^{bo}\), and after \( \alphaνδράσιν \) in a, I, P, 33, 81, 88, 104, 330, 436, 452, it\(^{ar, ce, dem, f}\), vg, syr\(^{pali}\), goth, arm, eth. See Lincoln, 351, note a.

\(^{23}\) P\(^{46}\), B, Clement \(^{1,2}\), Origen, Greek mss acc. to Jerome, Jerome, Theodore. See Bruce M. Metzger, \textit{A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament} (New York: United Bible Societies, 2002), 541. Metzger explains that the shorter reading (i.e., without the addition of the wifely commands) is to be preferred because it “accords with the succinct style of the author’s admonitions, and explained the other readings as expansions introduced for the sake of clarity, the main verb being required especially when the words \( ω \) \( \gammaυναίκες \) stood at the beginning of a scripture lesson.”

\(^{24}\) Although many scholars date P\(^{46}\) to around the year 200 CE (or somewhere between 175-225 CE), see the compelling arguments offered by Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett for dating this important papyrus to the mid-second century: \textit{The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts} (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 2001), 204-206.
wifely subordination in v. 22. Another Alexandrian text type manuscript which, like P₄₆, is missing a direct command to wifely subordination, is Codex Vaticanus (B). Dating to the early fourth century, B is slightly older than א; like א, B is highly regarded for its reliability. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE) is another very early witness to the lack of such a command in v. 22, as is Origen (185-254 CE) and, a century later, Jerome (347-420). Along with these important witnesses, two general rules in textual criticism, *lectio brevior praeferenda* (the shorter reading is better) and *lectio difficilior potior* (the more difficult reading is stronger), are applicable in regard to Eph. 5:22, namely that the reading without the added command to wifely subordination, i.e., the shorter reading, is to be preferred.25 Indeed, the case for a shorter reading is compelling here precisely because it is more difficult culturally: mutual marital subordination clearly goes against the grain of patriarchal Mediterranean cultures which uphold the subordination of all in the household, including one’s wife, to the male head. To summarize, then, given that a) these witnesses, as in the case of P₄₆ and Clement, are quite early, more than a century earlier than the manuscripts with the commands to wifely subordination, b) they are consistent over time (from possibly the mid second to early third centuries for P₄₆ and Clement, to the late fourth and early fifth centuries for Jerome), suggesting other very early manuscripts like P₄₆ that were in circulation and known to Clement, Origen, and Jerome, c) it is difficult to imagine either Clement or Jerome omitting any command to a

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25 See also the discussion for evaluating variant readings in Bruce Manning Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 302-304. Markus Barth, explaining the addition of the command to wifely subordination in the majority of manuscripts, states that “these MSS obfuscate the fact that a wife’s subordination to her husband is commanded only within the frame of mutual subordination; they support masculine superiority complexes that are supposedly grounded in Paul’s ethics” (610).
wife’s subordination if it had already been there in their own copy of the text,26 and d) the textual critical rules regarding *lectio brevior et difficilior*, it is therefore most likely that this verse in its original form as it came directly from the author lacked any direct command to wifely subordination.

This is important, not merely because v. 22, in itself, is originally without this command, but because, by lacking any sort of verb or participle, this verse becomes grammatically dependent on what comes before it: “being subordinate to each other in fear of Christ.”27 Thus, it is not that the author wishes to say that a wife should not be subordinate to her husband—indeed, quite the contrary—but, instead, that the submission of a *Christian* wife to her *Christian* husband is to be met by *his own submission* to her. To put it another way, in a Christian household, a wife’s subordination to her husband is not unilateral but reciprocal; by virtue of the masculine plural ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις of the preceding verse, subordination is a bi-lateral endeavor of a truly Christian partnership. What this implies exactly for both husband and however, however, will become clearer in the discussion below.

26 Clement, for example, a man of his time, follows Aristotle in his claims that a man’s “superior nature” makes him fit to rule, while a women, by her God-given “inferior” nature, is fit to be ruled (*Paedagogus* 3.3). In a similar way, Jerome writes of the necessity of a woman to be under the authority of a man so as to avoid “falling into temptation” (Letter LXXIX, “To Salvina,” 8). Yet, surprisingly, Jerome’s commentary on Ephesians indicates that he did understand that the text called for mutual subordination in a Christian household: “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 abstain from threats and offer them the necessary things of life which they possess (Eph 5:25; 6:4, 9). 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 rendering the duties which are recommended” (*Commentoriorum in Epistolam ad Ephesios*, cited in Ronald E. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 231.

27 As Lincoln (*Ephesians*, 351, note a) explains, “it is most likely that the best Greek text has no verb and was dependent for its sense on the participle in the previous verse.”
Given that a wife’s subordination, and not a reciprocal subordination between husband and wife, was the cultural expectation and norm, it is not so much a surprise that a carefully-worded and nuanced statement about a husband’s mutual submission to his wife in the marital code of Ephesians would be overlooked as that it would have even survived at all. Undeniably, the problematic textual history of v. 22 offers strong evidence of a common impulse to make the text more culturally acceptable.28 And, after all, since both Ephesians and Colossians claim Pauline authorship, a copyist’s desire to “conform” Ephesians 5:22 to Colossians 3:18 would have been quite understandably viewed as “clarifying” what was regarded as “Paul’s” intended meaning.

An important qualifier for a wife’s subordination to her husband is the phrase ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ, “as to the Lord.” We have seen already that this is more than a simple paraphrase of Colossians 3:18b, “ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν κυρίῳ” (“as is fitting in the Lord”) and that, instead, the redactional change to “as to the Lord” introduces the analogy between

28 A wife’s subordination to her husband was the universal cultural expectation, not mutual subordination. The idea of mutual subordination between two unequal partners would not only be entirely unexpected and novel, but viewed as unnatural, even as a potential threat to established societal order. Livy (59 BC-17 CE), for example, warns of what will happen if the established order is laid aside: “Review all the laws with which your forefathers restrained [women’s] license and made them subject to their husbands; even with all these bonds you can scarcely control them. What of this? If you suffer them to seize these bonds one by one and wrench themselves free and finally to be placed on a parity with their husbands, do you think that you will be able to endure them? The moment they begin to be your equals, they will be your superiors” (History of Rome, 34.3.1-3, Evan T. Sage, LCL). Dionysius of Halicarnassus (60-7BCE), anachronistically imposing peripatetic ideals upon Romulus, founder of Rome, wrote that Romulus set up a law which “obliged both the married women, as having no other refuge, to conform themselves entirely to the temper of their husbands, and the husbands to rule their wives as necessary and inseparable possessions. Accordingly, if a wife was virtuous and in all things obedient to her husband, she was mistress of the house to the same degree as her husband was master of it . . . .” (Roman Antiquities, II.25.4-5, Ernest Cary, LCL). See also Philo, Hypoth. 7.3; Josephus, C. Ap. 2.201; Plutarch, Conj. praec. 139BD 8,11. Roman law itself reinforced the inferior status of women. As the Roman jurist Aemilius Papinianus (146-212 CE) admits, “in many parts of our law the condition of women is below that of men” (D.1.5.9), cited in Judith Evans Grubbs, Women and the Law in the Roman Empire (New York: Routledge, 2002), xi. The list could go on and on, but for reasons of space we will limit ourselves to these few representative examples. As C. Leslie Mitton explains, “in the ancient world a man’s right to expect obedience from his wife was so universally conceded that a movement which seemed to countenance and approve a wife’s insubordination towards her husband would raise many prejudices” (Ephesians [London: Oliphants, 1976], 197).
Christ/husband and Church/wife that will predominate in the rest of the marital code. In contrast to Col. 3:18, there is no mention here, or even an allusion, to what might be “fitting.” As Markus Barth observes, there is no discussion brought up as to nature, law, Eve, or decency as the motive for subordination. On the contrary, “only the Lord Jesus Christ is the source, standard, and motivation of a woman’s subordination.” Thus, the subordination of a Christian wife given “as to the Lord” demands generosity, graciousness, and humility, precisely because it is given in love, “as to the Lord,” given in response to Christ’s own love, repeatedly alluded to throughout the epistle, a love to be emulated by her husband. Indeed, Christ is the beloved (1:6), the Bridegroom (5:25-32), the one who lays down his life for His Beloved Bride, the Church (5:2, 25). A generous, gracious, and humble subordination given “as to the Lord” can rightfully expect the same in return, after the manner of Christ’s own generous, gracious, and humble service to His Bride, the Church, emphasized in the verses to follow.

Put another way, a subordination described “as to the Lord” is a subordination which requires certain parameters which uphold the dignity and nobility, not only of a Christian wife, but of the love relationship shared between Christian spouses. In other words, there is a limit set on a wife’s subordination—a wife is to be subordinate to her husband only insofar as this subordination is in keeping with her primary subordination, i.e., that of a Christian to Christ (5:21b)—“in everything” (5:24). The expression “as to the Lord” is therefore a safeguard: anything outside of a Christian wife’s (or husband’s) primary subordination to Christ is, by implication, out of bounds. Nor may her husband

29 Barth, 613.
30 See Barth’s discussion, 612-613.
demand a subordination from her outside of the subordination which he, too, owes to his wife, as he owes to Christ (5:21b). A wife’s subordination given “as to the Lord” is thus far removed from groveling or mere servitude; it upholds the dignity and humanity both of the one who offers it and the one who receives it.31 In the context of the entire marital code, when given “as to the Lord,” a wife’s subordination becomes her own reciprocation of her husband’s subordination to her, with the obligation laid upon him to love his wife as “Christ loves the Church and laid his life down for her” (5:25).

5:23: ὅτι ἀνήρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας. αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος.

because a husband is head of his wife as also Christ is head of his Church. He is savior of his Body.

(a) 23 ὅτι ἀνήρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς
(b) ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας,
(c) αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος:
(b') 24 ἄλλα ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ,
(a') οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδραίς ἐν παντι.

As we saw in the discussion on structure above, verses 23 and 24 together form a chiasm with v. 23c as the central point: “he is savior of the body.” The language of these two verses is traditional, with references to a husband’s headship (v. 23a) and a wife’s subordination to that headship (v. 24b). The chiasm, however, emphasizes the Christocentric nature of the relationship between husband and wife and signifies that a

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31 How different this is from what Philo presents as the proper relationship between husband and wife in the Law of Moses: “Wives must be in servitude (δουλεύειν) to their husbands, a servitude not imposed by violent ill-treatment but promoting obedience (εὐπείθεια) in all things” (Hypoth. 7.3 [F. H. Colson, LCL]). Philo’s interpretation of Mosaic Law has an apologetic motive to it, however, and echoes Hellenistic and Roman ideas. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (60-7 BCE), for example, says something similar about the law laid down by Romulus regarding a wife’s obedience to her husband (Roman Histories II.25.4-5).
very traditional relationship is imagined in a completely new way within the framework of the analogy between the Cosmic Christ and the Universal Church.

Unlike Col. 3:18, what is offered here in v. 23 is not so much an order or command to wives but rather an explanation or rationale for a wife’s subordination, indicated by the ὅτι: “because the man/husband is head of the women/wife . . .” In Greek, ἀνήρ can mean both “man” and “husband,” just as γυνή means both “woman” and “wife.” In the literature of Greco-Roman medicine and philosophy, the word κεφαλή, or “head,” was considered the part of the body which governs or commands all the others. Without it, the body could not live. The head was also imagined as the source and origin of the body. As its head, a man’s monarchical rule over his household, including his wife, was the cultural expectation and norm and considered essential to a well-ordered

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32 Hence John Muddiman’s translation: “because Man is the head of Woman as also Christ is the head of the Church . . .” (Ephesians, 256).

33 Hippocrates, Morb. Sacr. 13.27-28; Plato, Timaeus 44d; 45a.1-2; 69d6-e3; Philo, Opif. 119; Spec. 3.184. A contemporary of our author, the physician Rufus of Ephesus, believed that the head was the most important part of the body because, through the brain, “all the activities of the body are carried out” (Onom. 163.12-14). See C. Daremberg and E. Ruelle, Oeuvres de Rufus d’Éphèse (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1963); A.J. Brock, Greek Medicine (New York: AMS, 1972). Galen follows Rufus in his view of the importance of the head vis à vis the rest of the body, thus suggesting that Rufus’ ideas were mainstream. See P. de Lacy, Galen: On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato (CMG V4, 1, 2, Pt. 1; Berlin: Akademie, 1978), 120.1-10. For a helpful summary of the way the head was viewed by ancient philosophers and physicians, see Clinton E. Arnold, "Jesus Christ: ‘Head’ of the Church (Colossians and Ephesians)," in Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 346-366. For a discussion of the meaning of “head” in the LXX as “leader” or “ruler,” see Lincoln, Ephesians, 67-70, 368-369.

34 Philo, Sacr. 1.115.

35 Hippocrates believed that the head was the starting point for the arteries, giving to the rest of the body its nourishment and supplying its needs (Nat. Hom. 19.11). Plato likewise viewed the body as having its source in the head, not only through the veins which supplied the body its nourishment through food taken in by the mouth, but because the sinews (νεῦρα) of the body themselves were attached to the head by means of the neck (Tim. 75c-d, 77c-e); similarly, Herodotus, Hist. 4.91; Orphic Frag. 21A (where Zeus is the “source” of all things); Philo, Congr. 12.61 (Esau as the “source” of a clan); Praem. 20.215; Artemidorus Daldianus, Oneirocriticon 1.2; 1.35; 3.66. In Col. 2:19 the head is understood as the “source” of the body.
society. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) describes the role of the husband as ruler, and that of the wife as “ruled,” and this was viewed as a “law of nature”: “the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject.”

Centuries later, Plutarch (46-120 CE) echoes Aristotle’s teaching in his own instructions on the proper relations between husband and wife: “If [women] subordinate themselves to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to have control, they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to be exercised by the man over the woman.”

However, throughout the marital code, the author of Ephesians redescribes a husband’s headship in some significant ways so that it becomes redefined, with control being replaced by loving service. The parallelism in the three clauses of v. 23 offers an insight into how the author views a husband’s headship:

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\text{o} \text{ti} \ \text{a} \text{n} \text{h} \text{r} \ \text{e} \text{s} \text{t} \text{i} \ \text{n} \ \text{k} \text{e} \text{f} \text{a} \text{l} \text{h} \ \text{t} \text{h} \text{i} \text{s} \ \text{g} \text{y} \text{n} \text{a} \text{i} \text{k} \text{o} \text{s} \\
\text{h} \text{o} \text{s} \text{k} \text{a} \text{l} \ \text{o} \ \text{X} \text{r} \text{i} \text{s} \text{t} \text{o} \text{s} \ \text{k} \text{e} \text{f} \text{a} \text{l} \text{h} \ \text{t} \text{h} \text{i} \text{s} \ \text{e} \text{k} \text{k} \text{l} \text{i} \text{s} \text{i} \text{a} \text{s} \\
\text{a} \text{u} \text{t} \text{o} \text{s} \ \text{so} \text{t} \text{h} \text{r} \ \text{t} \text{o} \text{u} \ \text{s} \text{o} \text{m} \text{a} \text{t} \text{o} \text{s}
\]

because a husband is the head of his wife  
as also Christ is head of his Church  
he is savior of his body

Here we see that immediately following the traditional statement that a husband is the

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36 Politics, 1.1259b; 1.2.12. Aristotle based his views on his premise that a woman was, upon conception, a “misbegotten” or “deformed” male (Gen. an. 2.3). Similarly, Philo refers to the man as the “head” of his family (Q.G. 2.11). For a helpful explanation of how Peripatetic ideals regarding household management become incorporated into early imperial Roman norms for moral behavior, see Balch, Let Wives Be Submissive.

37 Conj. praec. 142E.33.

38 In Greek, the definite article is used before “wife,” “Church,” and “body,” not a possessive pronoun. Nonetheless, the Greek definite article can sometimes take on the sense of a possessive pronoun. What is important is to make the parallelism of these expressions obvious in translating, whether with a corresponding definite article or a possessive pronoun in English.
head of his wife, the author adds the comparative conjunction ὡς with the adverb καὶ (which strengthens the comparison)\(^{39}\) to inform us about the quality of the Christian husband’s authority or “headship.” It is to be patterned after that of Christ’s own headship of the Church: ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, (“as also Christ is head of his Church”).\(^{40}\) We can observe here a parallelism that exists between “husband” as “head of his wife” and Christ as “head of his Church,” and that this parallelism is further carried out with the expression “he [is] the savior of his body.”

But what does the author mean by the expression “Christ is head of his Church”? An important theme for this epistle, Christ’s headship is mentioned three times. It is first mentioned near the beginning of the epistle where we see that it is cosmic in scope: God has made all things subject\(^{41}\) to Christ “for the sake of the Church, which is his body, the fullness of the one filling all in all” (1:22-23). In the paraenesis in the second half of the epistle, Christ as head inspires the ongoing growth and maturity of the members of the Church as they are instructed to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, Christ” (4:15). Already, then, even before we get to the marital code, Christ’s headship is understood as promoting the Church’s growth and development, fostering its full maturity, and helping it to “build itself up in love” (4:16).\(^{42}\) Here in 5:23, Christ’s

\(^{39}\) Larkin, *Ephesians*, 132.

\(^{40}\) The idea of Christ as “head” of his body, the Church, although inspired from Paul’s discussion of the Body of Christ in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, is not to be found in Paul’s undisputed letters. To be sure, Paul uses the expression “Body of Christ” in reference to the Church, with the Church’s individual members forming Christ’s body (1 Cor. 12:27). Yet nowhere in Paul’s undisputed letters is there any direct reference to Christ as the “head” of his body, the Church. It first appears in Col. 1:18, 2:10, 2:19.

\(^{41}\) The word here is ὑπέταξεν, an aorist verb from ὑποτάσσω, from which the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι in v. 21 is derived.

\(^{42}\) See also the parallels with Col. 1:18; 2:19; 3:15.
headship is defined still more by the parallel expression: αὐτός σωτήρ τοῦ σώματος ("he [is] savior of his body"). In other words, to be “head” is to be “savior.” Christ’s headship is thus essentially linked to his role as σωτήρ, or savior.

We must then ask, how might the term σωτήρ (sōtēr, “savior”) be understood by the author? In the Hellenistic Roman period, σωτήρ was used in reference to a ruler or city magistrate for the benefactions, security, and well-being that his wise leadership brought about. The word σωτήρ is found only once in Paul’s genuine letters, used in the context of the power (ἐνέργεια) of Christ who, while subjecting all things to himself, will transform what is humble, the human body, into something glorious (Phil. 3:20-21). The word σωτήρ is equally rare in Ephesians and is used only here in 5:23; nonetheless, the verses to follow in the marital code offer a helpful context to understand its meaning.

Taking up and developing Paul’s brief reference to σωτήρ, the author of Ephesians creates a new title for Christ, “head of his Church” and “savior of his body,” and

43 Cf. Werner Foerster, “σωτήρ,” TDNT 7:1003-1022. Foerster states that in Hellenistic philosophy, providing safety and security (σῴζω) was the “special task of the ruler” (1009) and that the use of this term increased in the Roman period (1008). We see this idea especially in Seneca’s De clementia where he instructs the young Nero about the importance of being a compassionate “head” for the survival of the whole empire: “[The emperor] is the bond by which the commonwealth is united, the breath of life which these many thousands draw, who in their own strength would be only a burden to themselves and the prey of others if the great mind of the empire should be withdrawn... Such a calamity would be the destruction of the Roman peace, such a calamity will force the fortune of a mighty people to its downfall. Just so long will this people be free from that danger as it shall know how to submit to the rein; but if ever it shall tear away the rein, or shall not suffer it to be replaced if shaken loose by some mishap, then this unity and this fabric of mightiest empire will fly into many parts, and the end of this city’s rule will be one with the end of her obedience... It follows that he too is dearer upon whom the whole state centres... [For] the state... needs a head” (De clementia I.4.1-3 [J. W. Basore, LCL]).

44 Interestingly, by way of contrast, in the disputed letters of Paul, σωτήρ is not used at all in Colossians. In the Pastorals it is almost always used as a title, either for God or Christ. In 1 Timothy σωτήρ is used exclusively in reference to God as savior (1:1; 2:3; 4:10), whereas in Titus, it is used both in reference to God as savior (1:3; 2:10; 3:4) and to Jesus Christ (or Christ Jesus) as savior (1:4; 2:13; 3:6). In 2 Timothy σωτήρ appears only once where it is used as a title for Christ (1:10).

45 Although taken from Col. 1:19, the actual expression in Colossians is slightly different: αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας (“he is the head of his body, the Church”).
equates them. But in the following verses (5:25-27), the author re-contextualizes these titles, giving them a fresh meaning where Christ as head and savior loves his Church/body in such a way as to transform her into something glorious and resplendent, serving her needs as his beloved Church-Bride: he “gives himself up for her,” washes her, makes her beautiful, warms her and nourishes her (5:25-27). Thanks to Christ’s loving service to her, even to the extreme of death, Christ’s body—his beloved Church—grows, develops, and thrives in her relationship with her savior and head (4:15b-4:16). As will become clear in the context of the rest of the passage, these two words, “head” and “savior,” commonly used to refer to those possessing power and authority, become redescribed in terms, not of control or even benevolent domination, but of loving service after the pattern of Christ. So, yes, then, a husband is head of his wife—this was a widely held notion that no one in the Hellenistic Roman world of the late first century would dispute. But superimposed on this traditional idea is a new one adapted from Colossians: Christ is head of his Church (Col. 1:18;2:19), and his headship functions in terms of his being “savior of his body.” As its “savior,” Christ serves his body. A Christian husband’s headship, then, must be patterned on Christ’s own who as savior is servant.

The strong analogy in the marital code between husband/wife and Christ/Church brings us to another question: how is the Church understood by the author of Ephesians? To be sure, the word ἐκκλησία, or “Church,” is used throughout the epistle, nine times in all (Eph. 1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23,24,25,27,29,32). Of those nine times, it is mentioned six times in the marital code (5:23,24,25,27,29,32). Unlike any other letter in the Pauline corpus, whether genuine or disputed, in Ephesians the Church is always understood as
universal, never as a local church. From the beginning of the epistle, the Church is referred to as Christ’s σῶμα, or “body,” described in cosmic terms as “the fullness of the one who fills the all in all” (1:23). In fact, in Ephesians the Church is more than merely an earthly reality; its members are the “holy ones” who have been “raised up with Christ” and seated with him in “the heavenly places” (2:6), where the Church makes known the wisdom of God (3:10).

Whatever the cosmic dimensions of the Church’s body, it is the members of the Church who together form the Body of Christ (2:16; 4:4,12,16; 5:30). Here we see Ephesians developing an idea taken from Colossians and the way the latter links the idea of “the body of Christ” with the word ἐκκλησία, or “Church” (Col. 1:18,24), something not specified in exactly the same way in Paul’s undisputed letters themselves. In fact, only in Ephesians 4:12 do we find the specific phrase “Body of Christ” used in reference

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46 Of all the epistles in the Pauline corpus, only Ephesians consistently uses ἐκκλησία in its broadest, most universal sense, never in a way to indicate a smaller congregation or a household church. This accords with how ἐκκλησία is used in the LXX to translate qahal Israel (יהוה קהל), “the congregation of Israel,” or qahal YHWH (יהוה קהל), “the congregation of the Lord,” i.e., Israel as a collective whole. This is in contrast to the use of ἐκκλησία in the larger Greek-speaking world where it means “assembly,” often that of the voting male citizens of the polis, or city-state. In fact, this is also different from the genuine letters of Paul where ἐκκλησία more often than not signifies the local house church. Out of 43 references to ἐκκλησία in Paul, only three times does Paul clearly refer to the Church in a broader sense: 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6. In each of these three instances Paul speaks of having persecuted either “the Church” (Phil. 3:6) or “the Church of God” (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13). Paul’s own usage of ἐκκλησία as both a local entity (following classical and Hellenistic usage) and a broader one (following the LXX) is similar to that of other first century CE Hellenistic Jewish writers (i.e., Philo and Josephus). Finally, it is also worth noting that, in contrast to the classical Greek and Hellenistic usage where ἐκκλησία signifies the assembly of voting male citizens of the polis, ἐκκλησία in Ephesians, like Paul, follows the LXX (which in turn follows the Hebrew) in its inclusion of women and children as members. For a more detailed discussion of ἐκκλησία in Greek literature, the LXX, Hellenistic Judaism, and Paul and Pauline literature, see K.L. Schmidt, “ἐκκλησία,” TDNT 3:509-518, 527-531. Wolfgang Schrage’s insights on the use of ἐκκλησία in the LXX are also helpful; see his essay “συναγωγή,” TDNT 7:802-803.

47 See the discussions on Eph. 5:26-27 in Chapter Four.
to the Church as a universal entity. These two major images of the Church in this epistle—Christ’s Body and Christ’s Bride—are inseparable. In fact, in 5:30-32 it becomes clear that the Church as Christ’s Body is also Christ’s own flesh. The Church, Christ’s beloved Body-Bride, taking her growth and development from her head (4:15-16), cannot exist apart from Christ, just as a body cannot exist apart from its head.

The relationship, however, is reciprocal. While the Church needs Christ, Christ’s work of universal salvation needs the Church: it is “through the Church that the wisdom of God is made known” universally (3:10) and that the “great mystery” of God’s love is revealed (5:32). Indeed, the Church, as Christ’s Body, is the “fullness of the One who fills all in all” (1:23). The Church, as the Body of Christ, offers to Gentiles the possibility to become “fellow heirs” and “sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel” by their incorporation as “members of the same body” (3:6) with “the holy ones” (1:1,4,15,18; 2:19; 5:3). In other words, it is through their incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church, that Gentiles, “without hope and without God” (2:12), come to be

48 Of course, the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ comes directly from Paul (1 Cor. 12:12ff; Rom. 12:4-5), although Paul himself never specifically connects the word ἐκκλησία (ekklēsia, or “church”) with the expression “Body of Christ.” The closest to the specific phrase “Body of Christ” that we encounter in the genuine letters of Paul is ἐν σῶμα ἐσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ (“we are one body in Christ”) in Rom. 12:5. Nowhere does Paul in his undisputed correspondence refer specifically to the Church as the “body of Christ.” Only in Colossians 1:18 (ἀγάπη ἐστιν ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας) and 1:24 (ὑπὲρ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ὃ ἐστιν ἡ ἐκκλησία) is the word σῶμα (“body”) specifically linked with the word ἐκκλησία in the same sentence as a reference to the Church as the “Body of Christ.” Yet not even Colossians uses the expression “Body of Christ” specifically, as we find it in Eph. 4:12, although it is undoubtedly implied.

49 The image of the Church as the “Bride of Christ,” however, undoubtedly comes from Paul (2 Cor. 11:2): “I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (NRSV). In the background is also Israel as the Beloved of YHWH in the Jewish Scriptures (Is. 54:5; Jer. 3:20; 31:32; Hos. 2:14-22).

50 Here the author of Ephesians incorporates an idea taken from Col. 2:19. See also note 35 above.
“saved by grace” (2:5,8). It is thus through the Church that the Head achieves his work of peace, reconciliation, and unity in the formation of one “new humanity” (2:15-16) gathered together and united into his Body. Clearly, then, the relationship between Head and Body is one of mutuality and reciprocity. Since this mutuality and reciprocity is true of Christ and his Church, it must also be true of husband and wife in a truly Christian partnership.

5:24: ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία υποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντὶ.

But as the Church subordinates herself to Christ, so also wives to their husbands in everything.

Verse 24 completes the sentence first begun in v. 17 as well as develops further the exhortation on subordination in v. 21. Verse 24 also presents the other side of the analogy between Christ/husband/head and Church/wife/body first introduced in v. 23. While v. 23 presents the parallel between Christ and the Christian husband, v. 24 presents the parallel between the Church and a Christian wife. The correspondence between v. 24a and v. 23b in which the Church is submissive to Christ (v. 24a) who is her head (v. 23b) is mirrored by a similar correspondence between v. 24b and v. 23a in which wives are subordinate to their husbands (v. 24b) because a husband is head of his wife (v. 23a). Thus, v. 24 continues the explanation first begun in v. 23 which offers a reason for a wife’s subordination. However, whereas the rationale given in v. 23 for a wife’s subordination is the very traditional idea that a husband is head of his wife,\(^5\) v. 24 offers a new idea, namely, that the Church is the model for a wife’s subordination in everything.

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\(^5\) This idea is also found in 1 Cor. 11:3. See also the discussion above on κεφαλὴ (“head”) in v. 23.
We saw in the discussion of v. 23 above that vv. 23-24 form a chiasm with v. 23c as its the central element: “he is savior of the body”:

(\(a\) \(23a\) ὅτι ἂνὴρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς
\(b\) \(23b\) ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας,
\(c\) \(23c\) αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος·
\(b′\) \(24a\) ὅλλω ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ,
\(a′\) \(24b\) οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἁνδράσιν ἐν πάντι.

The “savior,” of course, is Christ, while the body implied is the Church. Thus, the Church’s subordination to Christ in v. 24a is that of the body to its head (v. 23b), described as the body’s “savior” (v. 23c). With the analogy between Church and wife—the flip side of the analogy between Christ and husband—already the implication is made (to be developed and stressed in subsequent verses) that the wife is the body of her husband and that the husband as head of his wife must also serve her as “savior of his body,” just as Christ does his Church. In this way, while a wife’s subordination to her husband is not eliminated, nonetheless, it is given a new context by placing it within the analogy of the Church’s subordination to Christ as “savior of the body.”

What is this new context? In the first place, we must consider that here with v. 24 we see a second reference to the Church’s subordination which grammatically forms part of the same sentence with the first reference in v. 21. The first reference to the Church’s subordination is found in the exhortation to mutual Christian subordination in v. 21, discussed above. As we have already seen, grammatically and conceptually v. 24 is linked to v. 21 as part of a longer sentence that begins with 5:17. Indeed, this first reference to the Church’s subordination in v. 21 introduces the context for the second here in v. 24: the Church’s subordination to Christ is lived out among her members, men and women, husbands and wives, as mutual subordination to each other out of respect for
Christ. To put it another way, when it comes to the members of the Church, the subordination they give to each other as members of Christ’s own Body (v. 30) is subordination given to Christ himself. When we read this second reference to the Church’s subordination in v. 24 in light of the first in v. 21, the analogy between Church and wife thus recontextualizes a wife’s subordination in a Christian marriage as mutual exchange. The mutuality of the subordination in view here is, of course, freely given. This is seen in the form of the verb used in v. 24, ὑποτάσσεται, the third person singular, present middle indicative form of ὑποτάσσω (“subordinates”), implying the voluntary nature of the Church’s subordination.52 This indicates that the subordination of the Church to Christ—described in v. 21 as the mutual subordination of Christ’s members to each other—is not imposed. The context for it is not one of coercion, domination, or control. Far from it. The mutual subordination of the members of the Church (v. 21) who, as such, are members of Christ’s body (v. 30) is freely and willingly given (v. 24a).

As the expressions ἀλλὰ ὡς . . . οὕτως καὶ (“but as . . . so also”) and ἐν πάντι (“in all things”) in v. 24 make clear, a Christian wife’s subordination must be patterned after that of the Church’s own subordination to Christ: “but as the Church . . . so also wives”—ἐν πάντι, “in everything.” Yet, as we saw above in the discussion on v. 23, the Church enjoys a relationship of reciprocity with Christ. There is thus nothing about the Church’s subordination to such a Head which is demeaning or which indicates a subservient status. On the contrary, as the rest of the passage will make clear, it is Christ who takes a subservient status first in giving himself completely for the sake of his bride (5:2,25) and

52 Larkin, 133.
washing her through a “bath of water” (5:26), the task of a slave. Accordingly, genuine love demands reciprocity—“in everything.”

So yes, then, a wife is indeed to be subordinate to her husband—nothing new or different there—but her subordination, modeled “in everything” after that of the Church’s subordination to Christ, becomes her own reciprocal and freely given response to her husband’s freely-offered subordination to her, which he lives out in loving service as her “head” with a headship modeled on Christ’s own as “savior of his body.”

Summary and Conclusions

In this first segment of the marital code, the author of Ephesians offers a new context for a marital relationship between Christians—that of the mutual subordination that Christians are to give to each other out of respect for Christ. This new context is set up in a number of ways. To begin with, the author revises the command to wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 into an exhortation to mutual subordination in 5:21, and then constructs v. 21 grammatically in such a way that it becomes part of a longer sentence which begins in 5:17 and ends with 5:24. With the liturgical language of 5:17-20, i.e., “singing hymns and psalms and giving thanks,” the author offers an image of a gathering of the household church for shared prayer and worship. In this more liturgical context, v. 21 becomes a reminder to readers of the horizontal relationships in their household churches where the distinctions between them, imposed by the larger Gentile society, are erased. Here, in liturgy, they remind each other of the new reality that Christ gives them as the beloved sons and daughters of God (5:1) who live in Christ’s kingdom (5:5) where they are “subordinate to each other out of respect for Christ.”

53 See the discussion on v. 26 in Chapter Four.
Verse 21, however, is not written merely as a summary for proper household church relations during worship. The author so constructs v. 21 that, while it cannot be separated grammatically from 5:17-20, neither can it be separated grammatically from what follows it in 5:22-24. In this way, the exhortation to mutual subordination not only serves to summarize how Christians are to relate with each other as members of the Church, such as when they gather for liturgy and worship (5:17-21), but it also sets the context for how they are to relate to each other in the home, the locus of the domestic Church (5:21-6:9). Likewise, the author teaches that there is a connection, an important link, between what is sung and celebrated in liturgy and what is to be lived out at home. All, as members of Christ’s body (5:30), share equal dignity: they have all been raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly places (2:6). For this reason, the relationships enjoyed both in the worship gatherings of the household church and in the Christian home are to be markedly different from that of the dominant Gentile culture with its more vertical relationships where mutual subordination is not held up as a value (4:1-2,17).

This different view of relationships between believers as horizontal, as mutually subordinate, rather than as vertical, i.e., ranked from superior to inferior, extends even to the relationship between believing spouses. To be sure, nothing in this passage denies the traditional idea that a wife is subordinate to her husband. What the author does, however, which is unexpected is to add onto this very traditional notion the idea that marital subordination for a Christian couple is mutual. This is indicated by the way the author constructs vv. 21-22 to be grammatically linked to each other so that the exhortation to wifely subordination in v. 22 becomes inseparable grammatically from the exhortation to
mutual subordination in v. 21. In other words, there is no verb or participle in v. 22, so that the command to wifely subordination in v. 22 cannot exist apart from the command to mutual subordination in v. 21. In this way, by linking v. 22 to the grammatically masculine ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“being subordinate to each other”) of v. 21, the author teaches that subordination is not for wives alone. Husbands likewise are implied. Yes, wives are to be subordinate, but husbands, too, are to be subordinate to their wives. Again, what is sung and celebrated in liturgy is to be lived out at home. This, after all, is a Christian home and thus different from that of the Gentiles where vertical relationships are the norm.

A second traditional idea, namely, that the husband is “head” of his wife, is offered as the reason for a wife’s subordination to her husband in vv. 22-23. That being said, a husband’s headship becomes re-described by the analogy with Christ and his Church-Bride. As will become clear when we look at the rest of the passage, a husband’s headship is not imagined in terms of power, domination, control, or superiority—all common ways in which contemporary authors might describe a husband’s role vis à vis his wife. On the contrary, a husband’s headship is to be patterned after the Servant Christ who, as head of his Church (understood here as his body and bride), “gives himself up” in loving service for her sake (5:25ff). While this latter point will be made in the exhortation to husbands which follows, nonetheless, already in this first segment of the marital code, Christ’s servant leadership is alluded to with the central statement—the major focus of the chiastic structure formed by vv. 22-24—that Christ is “savior of his body.” With this central statement a husband’s headship becomes qualified: a husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the Church (5:23). Yet Christ’s headship is described in terms of
being “savior of his body.” The verses that follow explain what being “savior of his body” required of Christ, and what, by implication, it will require of a Christian husband.

Along with the analogy between a husband and Christ is the analogy between a wife and the Church. In vv. 22-24, the Church’s subordination to Christ’s headship is held up as the model for a wife’s subordination to her husband’s headship. In this way a wife’s subordination is not erased. Nonetheless, placed within the context of the whole marital code, it is noteworthy that it is not a wife’s subordination which is emphasized, but a husband’s obligation to love his wife. Much, much more can be said here, and we will need the rest of the passage to contextualize both the exhortation to mutual subordination in v. 21 and to wifely subordination in vv. 22-24 and what these verses mean within the analogy of Christ as head and husband and the Church as Christ’s body and bride. For now, what can be said is that this analogy is the author’s own original adaptation of sources from Paul’s genuine letters and Colossians and, although it appears in this initial segment of the marital code, it is developed much more in the exhortation to husbands in vv. 25ff. Already, however, what we can see here is that the author is re-interpreting very traditional ideas, such as a wife’s subordination and a husband’s headship, in some rather original and fresh ways which stretch the edges of Greco-Roman cultural convention.

The author’s originality and freshness, however, become muddied and blurred with later scribal emendations which insert an imperative form of ὑποτάσσειν (“to submit”) in Eph. 5:22, thereby creating an unambiguous command to wifely subordination. With the addition now of an imperative verb directed only at wives, these scribal changes have the effect of separating v. 21 from v. 22 grammatically so that the
command to wives in v. 22 is no longer linked to the command to mutual subordination in v. 21. As a result, v. 22 becomes read independently from what comes before it while the exhortation to mutual subordination in v. 21 is changed into a summary of what precedes it in vv. 5:17-20. In consequence, v. 21 is no longer a transitional verse that also serves to introduce the household code. In fact, the sentence with which the household code grammatically begins in Eph. 5:17 now ends with Eph. 5:21. With this change, just as in Col. 3:18, a new sentence is formed which begins with v. 22 and its newly added imperative verb. This new sentence with its clearly stated command to wifely subordination becomes read, just as in Col. 3:18, as the first verse of the marital code, its introduction. To put it another way, just as in Col. 3:18, this new sentence has now nothing to do conceptually with what precedes it in 5:17-21. Gone now is the author’s original insight into the link between liturgy and life, worship and home. Not only that, but with v. 22 as a new sentence separated from 5:17-21, there is no longer any grammatically implied inclusion of women worshippers with whom the men would relate in any mutually subordinate way. The masculine plural participial expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις (“being subordinate to each other”) may now be interpreted as referring only to what men do while at worship. After all, it is more palatable to have Paul command mutually subordinate relationships with other men rather than with women members, culturally regarded in the Greco-Roman world as men’s inferiors.

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54 With the implications of this scribal change in Eph. 5:22 we can see a parallel in how women’s liturgical roles were viewed in some Christian communities after Paul’s time, as is suggested by another scribal change, the interpolation in 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 where women are told to be both silent and subordinate to their husbands while at liturgy. See the discussion on 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 in Chapter Five.

55 See note 28 above.
By now it should be apparent that the inclusion of an imperative verb in v. 22 has
a number of consequences for interpretation and translation: 1) as Eph. 5:21 becomes
grammatically and conceptually separated from the marital code, its revision of Col. 3:18
is thereby erased; 2) Eph. 5:22 becomes conformed to Col. 3:18; 3) the entire marital
code of Ephesians becomes read and translated independently from the exhortation to
mutual subordination in v. 21; 4) with Eph. 5:21 eliminated from the marital code, there
no longer is a command to husbands to be mutually subordinate to their wives; 5) the
mutual subordination of Christian couples now becomes the unilateral subordination of
wives alone. All of this happens with just the addition of an imperatival form of
ὑποτάσσειν in v. 22. It does not matter which form of the verb, whether second person or
third person plural, nor does it matter where the newly inserted verb is placed, whether
near the beginning of the new sentence (after “wives”) or at its end (after “husbands”).
With just one imperative verb, regardless of its grammatical form or location, the
carefully written and delicately nuanced revision made by the author of Ephesians to Col.
3:18 becomes undone.

Of course, the variability in how the imperative verb in v. 22 is written and where
it is placed is but one indication that it was never part of the original text written by the
author of Ephesians. Another indication, however, perhaps the most important, is that the
earliest manuscripts of this passage are without an imperative verb in v. 22. As we have
seen, these early manuscripts show a syntactical link between v. 22 and v. 21 so that the
exhortation to wives in v. 22 is constructed to be inseparable grammatically and
conceptually from the exhortation to mutual subordination in v. 21. Nonetheless, the
scribal changes with the added imperative verb in v. 22 are found in a majority of extant
manuscripts and so translations both ancient and modern incorporate them with little or no regard for the earliest manuscript evidence linking v. 22 with v. 21. And in this way the original voice of the author of Ephesians, fresh and delicate, singular and distinctive, preserved for us in the earliest manuscripts, still today is rendered mute.
CHAPTER FOUR

AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF EPHESIANS 5:25-33

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by means of the bath of water in [the] word, so that he might present the Church to himself in glory, without a spot or a wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should likewise love their wives as their bodies. The one who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own flesh but nurtures and tenderly cares for it, just as also Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body. For this reason, a man will leave behind father and mother and will cleave to his wife and the two will be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I am speaking in regard to Christ and the Church. In any case, also you, let each one of you individually so love his own wife as himself, and [let] the wife respect her husband.

Introduction

In the previous chapter we examined the first major segment of the marital code, the introduction in Eph. 5:21 and the exhortation to wives in Eph. 5:22-24. We saw how the author linked vv. 21 and 22 and introduced the analogy with Christ and the Church in
vv. 22-24. We also saw how the link between vv. 21 and 22 became undone with additions made to v. 22 by later copyists and how these scribal changes have the end result of conforming Eph. 5:22 to Col. 3:18, thereby blurring the author’s own distinct perspective on husband-wife relations.

In this chapter we will look at Eph. 5:25-33, the exhortation to husbands, and continue the exegetical analysis of the marital code begun in the previous chapter. While volumes have been written specifically on the Christology and ecclesiology in this passage, the focus here is on the author’s teaching regarding the marital relationship and how that relationship is to be understood within the larger context of the analogy with Christ as husband and head and the Church as Christ’s bride and body. Again, just as in the previous chapter, introducing the exegetical discussion of each verse are summary observations on where the verse fits in the larger structure of the passage and how this affects meaning. This is then followed by a discussion in which key words in the verse are likewise examined for meaning, not only within the context of the epistle as a whole, but also within the Pauline corpus known to the author, as well as the LXX, Hellenistic Jewish literature, and the larger Greco-Roman world. All this will be done in order to understand in what way the author uses the analogy with Christ and the Church to support the author’s view of mutually subordinate partnerships in a Christian marriage.

**A Review of the Structure of Ephesians 5:25-33**

In the previous chapter we looked at the structure of the marital code as a whole. (See Appendix B.) There we saw how the passage is arranged into four different segments, segment A which introduces the marital code (5:21), segment B which
contains the exhortation to wives (5:22-24), segment C which contains the exhortation to husbands (5:25-32), and the summary segment A′ (5:33) with concluding exhortations to both husband and wife. With v. 25a, the marital code begins a new section directed at husbands (segment C):

C 25a Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας,
   (a) 25b καθὼς καὶ ο Ἑστός ἦγαπήσεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
   (b) 25c καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ύπὲρ αὐτῆς,
   (c) 26a ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τὸ λουτρό τοῦ ἰδατος ἐν ρήματι,
   26b ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἐαυτῷ ἐνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,
   26c ἵνα ἐχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ρυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιοῦτων,
   27a ἵνα ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι,
   27b ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἔνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,
   27c μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ρυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων,
   (d) 28a οὕτως ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σῶματα.
   (e) 28c οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναίκας ως τὰ ἑαυτῶν σῶματα.
   (f) 29a οὐδὲν ποτὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν
   (g) 29b αλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτὴν,
   (a) 29c καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,
   (e') 30 ὁτι μέλη ἐσμέν τοῦ σῶματος αὐτοῦ.
   (f) 31 ἀντὶ τοῦτο καταλείψει ἀνθρώπος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναίκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.
   (e'/) 32a τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν·
   32b ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

We saw how this new section, segment C, is the largest segment, not only of the marital code in particular, but of the entire household code in 5:21-6:9. It is divided into three smaller components, the first being the exhortation to husbands in v. 25a, the second
being the description in vv. 25b-29c of Christ’s love for his Church-Bride as the model for a husband’s love for his wife, and the third being vv. 30-32 which describe the “great mystery” of Christ’s union with the Church. Within this schema, v. 25a introduces the extended exhortation to husbands in vv. 25b-32. Verses 25b-29c together form a chiasm centered around v. 28ab, while vv. 30-32 form another chiasm centered around v. 31.

An Exegetical Analysis of Ephesians 5:25-33

5:25: Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὕπέρ αὐτῆς

Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her

Directed at husbands, v. 25 introduces the other side of the exhortation to mutual subordination with which the marital code begins in v. 21. While v. 22 develops the statement on subordination begun in v. 21, but in regard to wives, v. 25 introduces an extended instruction on the obligation of husbands in a mutually subordinate Christian partnership: to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.

Yet, whereas v. 25 corresponds with the exhortation to wives in v. 22, it differs from it in a number of ways. To begin with, unlike v. 22, which is part of a longer sentence stretching from 5:17-5:24, v. 25 begins a new sentence. Indeed, while the exhortation to wives is without verb or participle and entirely dependent grammatically upon the participle of v. 21, by contrast, v. 25a has an imperative verb, an unequivocal command to husbands to love their wives. This command to husbands is given great stress and emphasis throughout the rest of the marital code as a husband’s love becomes re-described within the analogy with Christ and Christ’s sacrificial love for his Church
which, as his Bride, is also his body. Emphasizing this idea is the exhortation in v. 28, placed at the center of the chiasm formed by vv. 25-29, where husbands are commanded not only to love their wives, as in v. 25, but to love them as their own bodies—just as Christ does the Church (v. 25b, v. 29c). Indeed, vv. 25b and 29c together form an *inclusio* with the expression καθώς καὶ ὁ Χριστός τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. In this way, the author stresses that a husband’s love for his wife should emulate Christ’s own extreme of love for his Church-Bride.

As we saw in Chapter Two, the command to husbands to love their wives is taken from Col. 3:19. We also saw how this single verse in Col. 3:19 (only ten words) becomes elaborated into nine verses in Ephesians where the command to husbands to love their wives is repeated twice more for a total of three times (5:25,28,33). In fact, in the marital code as a whole, much more space is given to the instruction on the love of husbands for wives than on that of a wife’s responsibilities toward her husband. Here in Eph. 5:25, in keeping with the idealism of the passage as a whole, the concomitant negative command in Col. 3:19b against husbands becoming embittered, irritated, or harsh toward their wives (μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτὰς) is omitted and replaced with another parallel with Christ’s relationship to the Church, his relationship of love for his Bride, a love unto death. With this analogy of Christ and the Church, the author highlights the significance of a husband’s responsibility to his wife, emphasizing the obligation upon him of a genuine love for her, a love which, like Christ’s, is a costly love, a love unto death that will require his own self-negation for the sake of his beloved.

As we saw above, unlike the previous exhortation to wives in v. 22-24 which,
without verb or participle, is dependent upon the exhortation in v. 21 directed at both husband and wife, the exhortation to husbands here in v. 25 is given in the form of an unambiguous imperative command to love: ἀγαπᾶτε. Whether as the verb ἀγαπάω (agapaō) or its participle, or the noun ἀγάπη (agape), this short epistle uses the word “love” twenty times—more than any other epistle in the Pauline corpus.¹ In Greek there are three words for “love” and each has a somewhat different nuance although they can, on occasion, overlap somewhat: erōs, philia, and agape.² While erōs is the love involved with desire and sexual passion, and philia is affectionate regard or the love shared between friends, agape is the love of choice, of preference, of commitment. In Hellenistic Judaism, it is sometimes distinguished from erōs in that it has the connotation of loving

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¹ In regard to the combined total occurrences for both the verb ἀγαπάω and the noun ἀγάπη (twenty times), Ephesians has more than any other letter in the Pauline corpus: in the undisputed Pauline letters, Romans (14x); 1 Corinthians (13x); 2 Corinthians (12x); 1 Thessalonians (7x); Galatians (5x); in the disputed letters, Colossians (7x); 2 Timothy (6x); 2 Thessalonians (5x).

In regard to the verb ἀγαπάω: Ephesians, ten times (1:6; 2:4; 5:2; 25(2x), 28(3x), 33; 6:24). In Paul’s undisputed letters, we find ἀγαπάω in Romans six times (8:28, 37; 9:13, 25; 13:8, 9); 1 Corinthians, twice (2:9; 8:3); 2 Corinthians, three times (9:7; 11:11; 12:15); Galatians, twice (2:20; 5:14); 1 Thessalonians, twice (1:4; 4:9). In the other disputed letters, we find ἀγαπάω in Colossians, twice (3:12; 19); 2 Thessalonians, twice (2:13, 16); 2 Timothy, twice (4:8,10).

As a noun, ἀγάπη is found in Ephesians ten times: 1:4, 15; 2:4; 3:17, 19; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2; 6:23), more than in any other work of Pauline literature, except for 1 Corinthians (eleven times: 4:21; 8:1; 13:1,2,3,4,8,13; 14:1; 16:14,24). Among Paul’s undisputed letters, ἀγάπη is found in Romans eight times (5:5, 8; 8:35; 39; 12:9; 13:10; 14:15; 15:30); 2 Corinthians, nine times (2:4, 8; 5:14; 6:6; 8:7,8,24; 13:11, 13); Galatians, three times (5:6,13,22); Philippians, four times (1:9; 16; 2:1,2); 1 Thessalonians, five times (1:3; 3:6,12; 5:8,13); Philemon, twice (1:7,9). Among Paul’s disputed letters, we find ἀγάπη used five times in Colossians (1:4,8,13; 2:2; 3:14); three times in 2 Thessalonians (1:3; 2:10; 3:5); five times in 1 Timothy (1:5,14; 2:15; 4:12; 6:11); four times in 2 Timothy (1:7,13; 2:22; 3:10).

² Plutarch, for example, uses the verb φιλέω (phileō) in reference to a husband and wife’s love for each other (Conj. praec. 139C.10; 141D.25), yet he also uses a participle of ἐράω (eraō) when describing the most ideal union between husband and wife (Conj. praec. 142F.34), while reserving the verb ἀγαπάω (agapaō) for parents toward their sons and daughters (Conj. praec. 143B.36). Nonetheless, Plutarch can also dismiss the superficial nature of erōs, while challenging a newly married couple to allow their love for each other to grow deeper (Conj. praec. 143.4) so that it becomes philia (Conj. praec. 139.10).
for its own sake, without the self-gratification of eroticism. Interestingly, instead of erōs, *agapē* is the word used to describe the love shared between the Lover and the Beloved in the LXX Song of Songs and the “deep love” that Tobias has for his betrothed (Tob. 16:17). *Agapē* is also the love of God for humans and of humans for God. In Paul, *agapē* represents the unconditional love of Christ (Rom. 8:37-39) and the love of the spiritually mature believer (1 Cor. 13:1-14:1). Looking only at the marital code of Ephesians, the verb *agapaō* is used six times, five times in reference to a Christian husband’s love for his wife (5:25, 28:3x; 5:33) and once in reference to Christ’s love for the Church as his Bride (5:25).

The insertion of καθὼς καὶ (“even as also”) indicates yet another comparison with Christ’s love for the Church. This is a love unto death, hence the analogy with Christ’s love which impelled him to “give himself up” (παρέδωκεν, the third person singular aorist of παραδίδωμι, “to hand over”) for his Bride, a word used in Paul in reference to Christ’s death. Galatians 2:20 specifically links a form of παραδίδωμι with Christ’s love: “the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” This particularly Pauline

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3 We see this in Hellenistic Jewish texts like the Testament of Benjamin, 8:2: ὁ ἔχων διάνοιαν καθαρὰν ἐν ἀγάπῃ οὐχ ὁρᾷ γυναῖκα εἰς πορνείαν· οὖ γὰρ ἡ ἀγάπη μιασμὸν ἐν καρδίᾳ, ὅτι ἀναπαύεται ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ. (He that has a pure mind in love, does not look after a woman with a view to fornication, for he has no defilement in his heart, because the Spirit of God rests upon him.)

4 Interestingly, however, while Tob. 6:17 in the Codex Sinaiticus reads λίαν ἠγάπησεν αὐτήν, Codex Vaticanus has instead ἐφίλησεν αὐτήν. This suggests the overlap that can be seen between *philia* and *agape*, as is also seen in John 21:15-17 and the passage from Plutarch’s *Conj. praecipu* 139.10, cited in n. 2 above.

5 Rarely found outside the LXX and Christian literature (twice in Philo and not at all in Josephus] *agapē* is used in the LXX to translate ἀγαύα (ahavah), which does not make the same distinctions as Greek does among the various forms of love. See Ethelbert Stauffer, “ἀγαπάω, ἀγάπη, κτλ,” *TDNT* 1:21-55.

6 Romans 4:25; 8:32; Gal. 2:20.
linking of “love” with “giving oneself up” is taken over twice in Ephesians (5:2,25). In Ephesians 5:1-2, the readers are told to “be imitators of God as beloved children, and to live in love, just as Christ also loved (ἡγάπησεν, from agapado) us and gave himself up (παρέδωκεν) for us.” Similarly, in 5:25 Christ gives himself up ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς, “for her sake,” i.e., that of the Church. The general command in 5:2 for the baptized to live in love to the extreme of Christ—again, καθὼς καὶ, “just as also” Christ—becomes restated in the more specific command to husbands in v. 25 to love their wives “just as also” Christ, i.e., in imitation of Christ who “gave himself up” (παρέδωκεν) in his own extreme of love on behalf of his beloved bride, the Church.  

In fact, when we look at how the author arranges the second and third clause in 5:25, it becomes clear that Christ’s love is synonymous with “giving himself up”: ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς (“Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her”). This is Christ’s love—to give oneself up for the sake of the Beloved. It is a love of cost, of self-sacrifice, a love which spends itself for the sake of the one loved. When the author tells husbands that they are to love their wives as Christ loves the Church, what the author is insisting upon is that husbands, like Christ, are to “give themselves up” for the sake of their beloved wife. For Christ, the life and well-being of his Bride is of greater value than his own life. In like manner, a husband who loves his wife as Christ loves his Church places a greater value on the life and well-being of his Bride over even his own life. 

How different is this “giving up oneself”—after the pattern of Christ—from the rest of the Gentile world described earlier in the epistle as “giving themselves up”

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7 Andrew T. Lincoln, Ephesians (WBC 42; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 374.
(ἐαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν) to the extreme, not for the sake of love, but for lewdness, debauchery, and greedy profit (4:19). Thus, a Christian husband is to be different. His love for his wife is not to be self-serving, calculated for his own gratification or self-promotion. Instead, in imitation of Christ’s own love for the Church, the Christian husband must be willing to lay down his life for his wife.

5:26: ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὑδάτος ἐν ρήματι,
so that he might sanctify her, cleansing her by means of the bath of water in [the] word

This verse continues the discussion in 5:25 regarding Christ’s love for his Church, a love unto death which transforms and elevates her. This love has three purposes, as indicated by three ἵνα (“so that”) clauses, the first appearing here: that Christ might sanctify the Church (v. 26); that he might present her to himself in honor and esteem (v. 27a); that she might be holy and without blemish (v. 27c):

26a ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὑδάτος ἐν ρήματι,
27a ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἐνδοξὸν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,
27b μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἢ τί τῶν τοιούτων,
27c ἀλλʼ ἵνα ἡ ἁγία καὶ ἀμοιμοῖς.

These three ἵνα clauses explain the purpose of Christ’s love, his “giving himself up” for the sake of his Church-Bride. The emphasis in this verse and the next is on the result of Christ’s transforming love for the Church, a love which sanctifies her, accomplished by his “cleansing her” in “the bath of water in the word,” a clear reference to baptism and the “word of God” (6:17). In the background is an allusion to 1 Cor. 6:11: “but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and

8 Lincoln (Ephesians, 375) notes that the definite article (literally, the washing in water) “may well indicate a specific event,” in other words, baptism.
in the Spirit of our God.” Here in v. 26 it is through both water (literally, the “bath of water,” τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος) and word (ῥήμα, from ῥῆμα, “word”) that Christ sanctifies the Church.

But what is meant by the expression “so that [Christ] might sanctify her”? The word used here is the subjunctive aorist verb ἁγιάσῃ (from ἁγιάζω, “sanctify,” “make holy”). In the LXX, ἁγιάζω means “[to] set apart” or “[to] separate” for divine use. Paul uses ἁγιάζω in reference to the separation from the believers’ pre-baptismal life of immoral behavior (1 Cor. 6:9-11). A similar idea is seen in Ephesians where readers are instructed, as baptized members of the Church, that they “must no longer live as the Gentiles do” (4:17). Instead, having “heard of Jesus” and “learned Christ” (4:20-21), they must now “put away” their “former way of life, corrupted through deceitful passions” (4:22). Not only are they to separate themselves from their former life for a new, righteous and holy life but now, as members of God’s household and “fellow-citizens with the holy ones” (2:19), they are even to shun contact with outsiders (5:7), who are described negatively as “callous, giving themselves over to debauchery and practicing to

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9 The influence upon Ephesians of the Septuagintal concept of holiness will become clearer in the discussion on the related word ἁγία (an adjectival form of ἁγιάζω) in v. 27 below. Briefly, however, what we can note here is that the verb ἁγιάζω occurs 194 times in the LXX, most often to translate the verbal forms of the root ἁγία, “set apart, consecrate” for divine use, whether of humans, sacrificial offerings, or things. This is in stark contrast to Greek literature where the verb ἁγιάζω is rarely found, except in Jewish and Christian authors citing or discussing the LXX (e.g., Philo’s commentaries on Septuagintal themes). See Otto Procksch, ἁγία, ἁγιάζω, TDNT 1:88-97. The verb ἁγιάζω is not found at all in Josephus and only eight times in Philo (Leg. 1:17f; Sacr. 1:118,134; Post. 1:64; Her. 1:117; Fug. 1:59; Spec. 1:167). Similarly, it is rare in Pauline literature as well. The verb ἁγιάζω is used only here in Ephesians while Paul himself employs it only six times (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; 7:14; 1 Thes. 5:23). In contrast to his rare use of the verb, Paul uses the substantival and adjectival forms of ἁγίος a total of forty seven times: 18x in Romans (1:2,7; 5:5; 7:12; 8:27; 9:1; 11:16; 12:1,13; 14:17; 15:13,16,25f,31; 16:2,15f); 12x in 1 Corinthians (1:2; 3:17; 6:1f,19; 7:14,34; 12:3; 14:33; 16:1,15,20f); 7x in 2 Corinthians (1:1; 6:6; 8:4; 9:1,12; 13:12f); 3x in Philippians (1:1; 4:21f; Col. 1:2,4,12,22,26; 3:12); 5x in 1 Thessalonians (1:5f; 3:13; 4:8; 5:26); 2x in Philemon (1:5,7). See the discussion below on ἁγία/ἁγίος for its use in Pauline literature.
excess every kind of impurity for greedy profit” (4:19). In contrast to these latter, the baptized have been given new life in Christ (2:5), and are “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (2:10), not the “unfruitful works of darkness” done by those who remain in a state of depravity and moral dissolution (5:11-12). Clearly then, for this author, to be sanctified by Christ means that the baptized are now qualitatively different, separated and set apart from what is profane (i.e., the dominant Gentile culture) to belong exclusively to Christ. They are God’s chosen ones (1:4), saved by God’s grace (2:5,8), and given a new identity, even a whole new humanity (4:22-24) that they may be imitators of God as God’s beloved children (5:1).

Thus, the quality of holiness, the state of being “set apart” for God, becomes described in Ephesians as being different from the dominant society, holding on to another set of values and a new way of being in relationship with each other. This new way of being in relationship is underscored by the image of Christ’s humble service to his bride as the one who himself “cleanses” or “washes” (καθαρίσας, from καθαρίζω, “wash,” “make clean,” “cleanse”) her with a “bath of water” (τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος).

While undoubtedly there is an allusion to Paul, “beloved, let us cleanse (καθαρίσωμεν) ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1), here in Eph. 5:26 it is Christ who does the washing, not the Church herself or the baptized who cleanse themselves. Numerous commentators\textsuperscript{10} see in v. 26

an allusion to Ezekiel 16:4-16 where YHWH himself rescues the abandoned and forsaken Jerusalem, enters into a marriage covenant with her and, in a prenuptial bath, washes and adorns her with fine linen and embroidered clothing, jewels, gold and silver, making her “exceedingly beautiful.” Certainly, the word λουτρόν (“bath” or “bathing place”) calls to mind the elaborate ceremonial ritual bath of a bride prior to marriage. That this is a prenuptial bath is implied by v. 27 with the presentation of the Church as bride to her groom in all her beauty, an impressive and honorable presentation that the bridegroom, Christ, alone makes possible. It is for the sake of love, of course, that Christ stoops to become as the lowliest household servant of all to bathe his bride in order to make her holy, honorable, and beautiful. He does this by “giving himself up for her” (5:25). In the background is an allusion to the hymn of the lowly and exalted Christ in Philippians who takes on “the form of a slave” (Phil. 2:7). Obviously, we are dealing with the fluid language of metaphor, and sometimes, as here, metaphors can be rather malleable and plastic; the metaphor simply points to Christ who, for the sake of love, takes the lowest place in relation to his bride, the Church, and this he does with the purpose of sanctifying her, i.e., ennobling her and elevating her status. Sanctified by Christ, she is “raised up” and “seated” “in the heavenly places” with her Beloved (2:6). He becomes lowly in order to raise her up and exalt her.

Christ sanctifies his Church, however, not just through a “bath of water,” but ἐν ῥήματι “in [the] word.” The word ῥήμα (“word”) found here in v. 26 and again in 6:17,
ῥῆμα θεοῦ (“word of God”), is used in a way reminiscent of Rom. 10:8 (“the word is near you, on your lips and in your heart, that is, the word of faith which we proclaim”) and Rom. 10:17 (“So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ”). 12 A synonym for ῥῆμα is λόγος, found in Eph. 1:13: τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν (“the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”). 13 Here we see “the gospel of your salvation” used in apposition to “the word of truth” so that the two expressions become synonymous: the word of truth is the gospel of salvation. In 6:17, it is through means of a word (λόγος) that the “mystery of the gospel” is made known. Hence, the idea of “word” in this epistle is linked to the gospel message. 14 It is also linked to the idea of holiness, the idea of belonging entirely to God: by “hearing the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation,” believers in Christ are marked “with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit” (1:13) and become God’s own possession (1:14). Through their welcoming of “the word of God,” believers experience the salvation that this word brings: they become “beloved children of God” (1:5; 5:1) and valued members of God’s own household (2:19). As such, they are warned against using words in a way that is contrary to the gospel message of salvation: “Let no

12 In Paul’s undisputed letters it is found six times (and only in Romans and 2 Corinthians): Romans 10:8 (2x), 10:17,18; 2 Cor. 12:4, 13:1. Interestingly, ῥῆμα is not found at all in Colossians or the Pastorals.

13 The language of Eph. 1:13 is borrowed from Col. 1:5, τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (“the word of truth, the gospel”).

14 See the discussion in Lincoln (Ephesians, 376) of the scholarly debate on whether ἐν ῥήματι in 5:26 is a reference to a) a baptismal confession of faith, b) to the baptismal formula pronounced over the one being baptized, or c) the gospel message. Of these three options, only c) is confirmed from the epistle itself, whereas a) and b) are inferred from other early Christian literature.
worthless word (λόγος σαπρὸς) come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your speech may give grace to those who hear” (4:29). On the contrary, they must now relate to each other as the humble Christ relates to them: “with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace” (4:2).

Through water and the word, then, the members of the household of God are empowered for a new form of relationship with each other. Baptism makes no distinctions among them, whether of gender, class, or ethnic origin. On the contrary, baptism ennobles all and raises all to equal dignity: all are seated with Christ in the heavenly places (2:6); all are “co-citizens with the holy ones” (2:19). Indeed, for all those cleansed and made holy by Christ, exalted and ennobled by Christ’s lowliness and humility, there should be nothing demeaning or undignified in “giving oneself up” for the sake of love, in assuming the lowest place in order to exalt the beloved. In traditional Pauline teaching, it is Christ’s taking on the form of a slave and “making himself a ‘nothing’” which becomes the occasion for his great exaltation (Phil. 2:7-11) and the reason for their own (Eph. 2:4-9; 5:25-27). In this way, for those who are washed and cleansed by the humble and exalted Christ and transformed by an openness to “the word of truth, the gospel of salvation,” the traditional and conventional modes of relationship based on power, domination, and control are inverted into a new form of relationship where power becomes transformed into voluntary service, domination into mutual subordination, and control into loving reciprocity.

5:27: ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἐνδοξόν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἢ τί τῶν τοιούτων, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα ἡ ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος.
so that he might present the Church to himself in glory, without a spot or a wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she might be holy and without blemish.

We have already observed that the first purpose for which Christ “gave himself up” (5:25) was to sanctify the Church (5:26). The second purpose, indicated by the second ἵνα clause here in 5:27a, is “so that he might present (ἵνα παραστήσῃ) the Church to himself in glory.” Paul uses the same verb (from παρίστημι, “present”) when, likening himself to the “father of the bride,” he writes to the local church at Corinth that “I have promised you in marriage to one husband, to present (παραστῆσαι) you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2). In Col. 1:22, it is Christ alone who presents the believers to himself as “holy, without blemish, and irreproachable,” but without any mention of the Church as Christ’s Bride. Here, however, with a combined allusion to both 2 Cor. 11:2 and Col. 1:22, the author offers us the image of Christ the Groom who presents his Bride to himself “in glory” (or ἐνδόξον, from ἐνδόξα: ἐν, “in,” and δόξα, “glory”).

Although the word ἐνδόξον is used only here in Ephesians, the word δόξα, “glory” is used eight times, seven times as a quality of God. As head of the Divine

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15 Other ways of translating ἐνδόξον (fem. acc. sing. of ἐνδόξος) would be “glorious,” “renowned,” “in high esteem,” “honorable,” “magnificent,” “extraordinary.” Both the NAB and NSRV here translate ἐνδόξον as “in splendor.” In the LXX, it is used in reference to honorable people (1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Chron. 4:9) or nobles (Ps. 149:8; Esther 1:3; Nahum 3:10), as well as for Jerusalem (1 Esdras 1:53). It is also used in relation to God: God’s wonderful deeds toward Israel (Ex. 34:10); the praise offered to God (Ex. 15:1, 21); of God’s honorable name (Is. 24:15; 19:19), and of God as the One to be honored (Is. 60:9). See Gerhard Kittle, ἐνδόξος, TDNT, 2:254-55. Paul uses a form of ἐνδόξος only once, in 1 Cor. 4:10 where it has the meaning “in honor”: “We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor (ἐνδόξοι), but we in disrepute.”

16 Eph. 1:6,12,14,17,18; 3:16,21. The single exception, Ephesians 3:13, refers to the sufferings of Paul which are “for the glory” of the Gentile readers of the epistle. The use of δόξα here in Ephesians (unlike its use in secular Greek where its basic meaning reflects its root word δοκέω, “think,” “suppose,” “seem”) follows the LXX where it is almost always used to translate יהלל יهوּ (י δόξα κυρίου), “the glory of the Lord” (Kittel, “δόξα,” TDNT 2:232-251).
household, the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3), is the “Father of Glory” (1:17) who freely bestows “the riches of his glorious inheritance among the holy ones” (1:18), which he does “for the praise of the glory of his grace freely bestowed in the Beloved” (1:6). In fact, it is in the Church, as in Christ, that glory is given to God (3:21). Thus, in sanctifying the Church (v. 26) and presenting her to himself “in glory” (v. 27a), Christ ennobles her, elevates her status, and bestows upon her the honor, i.e., the “glory,” of the Divine Household to which she has been admitted as his Bride. In what does this “glory” consist? Christ’s love renders his bride absolutely beautiful: she is without “any spot (σπίλον) or wrinkle (ῥυτίδα) or any such thing” that would mar or lessen her beauty. The image here is one of a bride resplendent on her wedding day and arrayed in all her loveliness; yet from the third ἵνα clause in 27b, we know that this bride’s beauty is moral, one of holiness and innocence: Christ “gives himself up” (v. 26) so that his bride may be “holy (ἁγία) and without blemish (ἄμωμος),” i.e., without any defects. For this author, glory consists in holiness and moral blamelessness, Christ’s own holiness and innocence which he in his love freely bestows upon his beloved Church-Bride when he washes her, rendering her beautiful and spotless. In this way, she comes to resemble him.

Worthy of note here is the epistle’s repeated emphasis on the idea of holiness. Here in v. 27b the word “holy” (ἁγία) appears as an adjective (“that she might be holy”). In fact, throughout Ephesians, the word ἁγιος (“holy”), as either a noun or an adjective, is used fifteen times, most often to refer to members of the Church, following Paul’s own

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17 We are reminded here of Cicero’s description of the “persona sapientis” of the Stoics whose true beauty lies in the soul’s moral qualities (De finibus 3.75).
frequent use of its plural substantival form, ἅγιοι (“holy ones” or “saints”). From the very first verse, the epistle intentionally addresses the readers as ἅγιοι (“holy ones” or “saints”) who, as members of the Church, are chosen “from the foundation of the world” to be “holy and without blemish (ἀγίους καὶ ἀμώμους) before [God] in love” (1:4). They are heirs to a “glorious inheritance among the holy ones” (1:18). Having been made holy, they are now raised with Christ and seated with him in “the heavenly places” (2:6).

There, as “fellow-citizens with the holy ones,” they are members of God’s own household (2:19), where, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone” (2:20), they are to “grow into a holy temple in the Lord” (2:21).

We have seen above how the author’s idea of holiness is shaped by the LXX where ἅγιος, as both a noun and adjective, translates קָדָשׁ as that which pertains to God alone, or that which is separated from what is profane and reserved for exclusively divine use. To be even more precise, in the LXX what is “holy” is essentially different: God is holy, and thus Israel, too, is to be holy, God’s special possession, different and set apart from all the Gentiles (and Gentile immorality). We have also seen how Ephesians

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18 Eph. 1:1,4,13,15,18; 2:19,21; 3:5,8,18; 4:12,30; 5:3,27; 6:18. Of these, nine times ἅγιοι is used as a reference to the members of the Church: 1:1;15,18; 2:19; 3:8,18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18. This imitates Paul’s own use of ἅγιοι as he frequently employs the word to refer to members of the Church: Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25f,31; 16:2,15; 1 Co. 1:2; 6:1f; 14:33; 16:1,15; 2 Co. 1:1; 8:4; 9:1,12; 13:12; Phil. 1:1; 4:22; 1 Thess. 3:13; Phlm. 1:5,7.

19 Israel is commanded to be “holy” as her God is holy: Lev. 11:44-45; 20:7,26; 21:6; Num. 15:40; 16:3. Thus, Israel is set aside as “a holy people” (ἔθνος ἅγιον) indeed, a “special people” (λαὸς περιουσίος) separated from among “all the Gentiles” (ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν) as God’s chosen possession: LXX Ex. 19:5; 23:22; Dt. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19; 28:9; see also Ps. 134:4: “For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel for his special treasure” (περιουσιασμόν αὑτοῦ). If Israel ceases to be different from the Gentiles (τῷ ἔθνῃ) by committing any “disgraceful deed” (ἀσχημοσύνη πράγματος), God will “turn away” and, in consequence, Israel will become vulnerable to its Gentile enemies (Dt. 23:15; see also Lev. 18:24-28). In
incorporates Paul’s adaptation of the Septuagintal concept of holiness as the moral character required to separate oneself from one’s former immoral way of life. Further, as we have seen in the discussion on v. 26 above, “the holy ones”—members of the Church—become God’s own possession upon “hearing the Word of Truth, the Gospel of Salvation, believing in Christ, and being sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (1:13-14). Because Christ has made them holy, the readers’ incorporation into the Church as God’s “saints” or “holy ones” makes them fundamentally different and set apart from who they were before: “Gentiles . . . without Christ, alienated from the politeia of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God” (2:12). Now, by Christ’s blood, they “who once were far off have been brought near” (2:13) into “one new humanity” (2:15) and given a new identity, even a “new self, created according to God’s likeness in true righteousness and holiness” (4:24). “Once darkness” themselves, they have now been made to be “light in the Lord” (5:8a). Having been enlightened, they are to live as “children of light” separated from “the fruitless works of darkness,” i.e., the “shameful” things that the unenlightened do “in secret” (5:8b-12).

Of course, it is not hard to hear in the background Paul’s own instructions to the Philippians in which he urges readers to be “blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish (ἁμωμός) in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [they] shine like stars in the world” (Phil. 2:15). We can likewise detect the author’s adaptation of Col. 1:21-22: “And you who were once estranged and hostile in other words, both Israel’s holiness as well as its survival consist in its obedience to the Divine Command which demands the complete avoidance of the sorts of crude, unjust, and immoral behaviors described as being acceptable among Israel’s neighbors, i.e., “the Gentiles.”
mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through his death, to present you holy and without blemish (ἁμώμους) and irreproachable before him.” Only in Col. 1:22 and Eph. 1:4 and 5:27 do we find the coupling of the words “holy and without blemish” (ἁγιος καὶ ἁμώμος).20 Following Colossians 1:20-22, in Ephesians being “without blemish” or “blameless” is the quality which allows believers in Christ to be “presented before him,” i.e., to be in Christ’s presence. This is why they can be “raised up” and “seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (2:6).21 What has been an impediment to such exaltation, namely, their moral impurity, has been removed, washed away in Christ’s bath, and they have been made “holy and blameless.” “Blamelessness,” however, is not something gained through one’s own efforts; on the contrary, it is achieved solely through Christ’s blood (Eph. 1:7), his “giving himself up” (5:2,25).22

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20 The word ἁμώμος can also be understood to mean “blameless,” as we see in the NRSV (Col. 1:22 and Eph. 1:4). As used here in Ephesians, ἁμώμος follows the LXX where it translates θαμών, used in both the cultic sense to designate a sacrificial offering without physical defect and the moral sense to mean “upright” or “without guilt.” An offering was not to be presented for sacrifice unless it were without physical blemish; similarly, only one who was ἁμώμος, i.e., “blameless,” in a moral sense could dare to come into God’s presence. For example, in Ps. 14:1-2 (LXX), the one who “walks blamelessly” (πορευόμενος ἁμώμος), “doing justice and speaking truth in his heart,” is the one who may dwell (παροικήσει) in God’s tent, on God’s holy mountain.

21 A similar idea is found in Seneca where the mind of the sage is attracted to the divine things of heaven: “The mind (animus) is admitted to the possession of the immense spaciousness of the heavens . . . only if it has worn away all sordidness (si sordidum omne detersit) and, unencumbered and light, flashes forth. . . There the mind dwells, not as an alien, but as among its own kind” (Nat. Quest. I, Pref. 11). Of course, the difference with Ephesians is that the heavenly exaltation of the “holy ones” is the achievement of Christ, not their own.

22 Eph. 1:7: “In him we have redemption (ἀπολύτρωσιν) through his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, according to the riches of his grace (κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ).” Paul says something similar in Romans 3:24-26: “they are now justified (δικαιούμενοι) by his grace as a gift (δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι), through the redemption (ἀπολύτρώσεως) that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement (ἱλαστήριον) by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus” (NRSV).

However, nowhere in either Colossians or Ephesians is to be found Paul’s own choice of
fact, by implication, Christ’s sacrifice is anticipated from even “before the foundation of the world” when members of the Church were first chosen in Christ to be “holy and without blemish before him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

Thus, Christ’s love for the Church is not something the Church has earned; it is freely given (2:5,8). His love adorns her with exquisite beauty—her holiness and blamelessness—which he bestows as sheer gift, given to her through the blood of his sacrifice, his total and complete gift of self for her, the expression of the great esteem in which he holds her.

5:28: οὕτως οὐπότος ὑπείλουσιν καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες ἄγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα.
28c ὁ ἄγαπῶν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ.

In the same way, husbands should likewise love their wives as their bodies. The one who loves his wife loves himself.

We saw above that v. 28ab is the central idea in the chiasm formed by vv. 25b-29c. We also saw that v. 25b and v. 29c together form an inclusio with the expression καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς [ηγάπησεν] τὴν ἐκκλησίαν (“just as also Christ [loved] the Church”). While the first half of the chiasm, formed by vv. 25b-27, describes Christ’s self-sacrificial and tender love for his Church-Body-Bride, the second half, formed by vv.

vocabulary, either in regard to Paul’s language of justification (with a form of δικαιώω used twenty three times throughout the undisputed letters: Rom. 2:13; 3:4,20,24,26,28,30; 4:2,5; 5:1,9; 6:7; 8:30,33; 1 Co. 4:4; 6:11; Gal. 2:16(3x); 3:8,11,24; 5:4), or in regard to his language of atonement (i.e., his use of ἱλαστήριον, “expiation” or “sacrifice of atonement,” following its distinctive use in 4 Mac. 17:22 in reference to the sacrificial death of martyred heroes: “And through the blood of those devout ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice (τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῶν), divine Providence preserved Israel that previously had been mistreated”). Instead, while preserving Paul’s language of redemption in Col. 1:14, Colossians 1:21-22 paraphrases and explains Paul’s language of justification, substituting it with the language of reconciliation: “and you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him.” Throughout Ephesians, as well as here in Eph. 5:27, we see the author retaining the language of Colossians’ paraphrase of Paul’s teaching on justification, while avoiding the distinctive vocabulary of justification and expiation found in Paul’s undisputed letters.
28c-29, offers reasons for why a husband ought to love his wife as his own body. By placing v. 28 at the center of the chiasm, the author stresses the obligation of husbands to love their wives as their own bodies, “just as also Christ does the Church” (vv. 25b, 29c). Indeed, the love of Christ for the Church, described in the previous verses as freely given and self-sacrificing, a love which elevates and ennobles his Church-Bride, holding her in high regard and esteem, is clearly held up as the standard for the Christian husband’s love for his wife. Thus verse 28 begins with the second use in this passage of the adverbial expression ὅτως (“in the same way,” “in this manner,” “thus,” “so”) καὶ (“also,” “too,” “and,” here translated as “likewise”) and forms a correlative construction with καθὼς in v. 25b, linking the precept requiring the love of husbands for their wives to the standard already set forth in vv. 25b-27. In the first use of ὅτως καὶ in the marital code, in v. 24 above, wives are instructed to relate to their husbands “in the same manner as also” (ὁτός καὶ) the Church relates to Christ. With this second use of ὅτως καὶ, husbands are now instructed to relate to their wives in the same way as Christ relates to the Church: in the humble, self-giving, and self-sacrificing love by which “the head” serves the needs of “the body” with great honor, extravagantly exalting and glorifying it.

The following word ὀφείλουσιν (from ὀφείλω, “to be due,” “ought,” “should”) indicates an obligation. While ὀφείλω is used throughout Paul’s genuine correspondence, in Ephesians it is only used here in v. 28a and in reference to the obligation of husbands to their wives. Remarkably, there is no reciprocal use of ὀφείλω in reference to the duty

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24 In Paul’s undisputed letters, ὀφείλω is found in Rom. 13:8; 15:1,27; 1 Co. 5:10; 7:36; 9:10;
of wives toward their husbands. Instead, coupled with ἀγαπᾶν (the present active infinitive of ἀγαπάω), 25 ὀφείλω emphasizes and reinforces the obligatory nature of the love of husbands for their wives first introduced in v. 25. In contrast to the single command to husbands in Colossians 3:19, the multiple repetition of ἀγαπάω here in v. 28 (three times) and in the marital code as a whole (six times: vv. 25a, 25b, 28a, 28c, 33) in regard to a husband’s love for his wife is therefore significant. Various motives for this love are offered. In v. 25, the first motive given to love one’s wife is the imitation of Christ: husbands are commanded to love their wives “just as Christ loved the Church.” Here in v. 28, two additional motives are offered: a) husbands are told they “should love their wives as their own bodies” and b) the one who loves his wife loves himself. These motives are further developed and elaborated upon in vv. 29-31.

There is some discussion regarding the adverbial conjunction ὡς, “as,” whether it should be read in a comparative sense (i.e., husbands are to have a love for their wives which is similar to their love for their own bodies) or as indicating self-identity (i.e., husbands are to love their wives as a part of themselves). 26 To be sure, ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν

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25 See the discussion above on ἀγαπάω.

26 See the summary of scholarly debates on this question by Lincoln (Ephesians, 378-379) and Harold W. Hoechner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 764. Hoechner argues that ὡς should be read in both ways, whereas Lincoln argues for the comparative meaning of ὡς. The various ways to interpret ὡς are seen in the different English translations for this verse. The NRSV, for example, translates ὡς as a comparative particle: “husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies,” i.e., as they love their bodies, so they should love their wives. The NAB, on the other hand, translates ὡς ambiguously: “husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.” It is unclear in the NAB whether husbands are to love their wives as they do their bodies or as a part of themselves. The NIV,
σώματα, “as their own bodies,” anticipates ὡς ἑαυτόν, “as himself,” in v. 33 which would seem to be an echo of LXX Lev. 19:18, the injunction to love one’s neighbor as oneself.27 Yet the text here goes beyond love of neighbor; the following verses will make it clear that a wife is considered much more. As we saw in the structural analysis of the entire marital code in Chapter Three, there is a parallelism between τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας, “their own wives” in v. 28a, and τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα, “their own bodies” in v. 28b, intensified by the use of the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτῶν, which suggests an equation between γυναῖκας, “wives,” and σώματα, “bodies,” so that the conjunction ὡς should be seen as functioning here as the grammatical equivalent of a mathematical “equal sign”28:

28a οὕτως όφείλουσιν καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας
28b ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα.

This equation between “wives” and “bodies” fits the analogy already established between Christ as head of the Church, his body, and the husband as head of his wife, discussed above. Until now, however, a wife was not described as being the “body” of her husband in the way that the Church is the “body” of Christ. Here with v. 28 we are given an introduction into the logical conclusion of the analogy: as the Church is the body of


27 Lincoln, Ephesians, 378. Seeing here a parallel with LXX Lev. 19:18, ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν, “you will love your neighbor as yourself,” Lincoln argues for a similar comparative reading here, though it need not follow that the author of Ephesians is limited to how LXX Lev. 19:18 uses the particle ὡς.

28 Dawes (The Body in Question, 97-99) sees the use of ὡς here as “deictic,” or indicating identity.
Christ, so a wife is the body of her husband. Indeed, this analogy will become further developed in the following verses where the word σώματα (accusative neuter plural of σῶμα, “body”) is parallel to how σάρξ, “flesh,” is used in vv. 29 and 31 to describe the unity—the “one flesh”—of husband and wife. When viewed in the context of the rest of the passage, then, ὡς takes on more than comparative force. Instead, it should be read as indicating identity and understood to mean: “husbands should love their wives for they are their bodies.”

The maxim which immediately follows in v. 28c makes this even clearer: “the man who loves his wife loves himself.” This anticipates the idea of a wife as being “one flesh” with her husband in v. 31, and suggests on some level a lack of distinction or differentiation between a husband and wife: the bond between them is such that what the one does to the other is done to oneself. To be sure, a similar bond exists for all the baptized who, by virtue of their joint incorporation into Christ as His body, are “members of each other” (4:25). Because they are “members of each other,” they are to treat each other with the utmost respect and kindness (4:2,25-32). If such is the unity that is to exist among believers, how much more profound, then, is to be the unity of husband and wife.

Of course, it is the husband who, as head, is addressed here. Because in Greco-Roman society the husband had the higher status, the rhetoric of the marital code is aimed at him to persuade him to act against cultural norms. Accordingly, it is the husband who

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29 Muraoka, for example, insists on the importance of reading ὡς in Eph. 5:28 in the light of v. 28c (“the one who loves his wife loves himself”) and v. 31 (“and the two will become one flesh”), observing that “from the context it is obvious that the meaning is not that one’s own wife is like his body, but that she is his body, just as the Church is Christ's body” (“The use of ὡς in the Greek Bible,” 60).

30 This is how Barth translates this verse, thereby eliminating the ambiguity regarding ὡς (629).
is the one charged with the greater responsibility to set the tone for the marital relationship by loving his wife according to the highest Christian ideals, spelled out and elaborated upon throughout this passage. The following verses develop the rationale for a husband’s love of his wife as an intimate and valued part of himself.

5:29: Οὐδεὶς γὰρ ποτε τὴν ἐαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν

For no one ever hates his own flesh but nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as also Christ does the Church.

The conjunction γὰρ, “for,” introduces an explanation for the preceding maxim, “the one who loves his wife loves himself,” in the final segment of v. 28: “for no one ever hates his own flesh . . .”31 With the use of the reflexive pronoun ἐαυτοῦ in the expression τὴν ἐαυτοῦ σάρκα, “his own flesh,” a third parallel is added to τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας, “their own wives,” and τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα, “their own bodies” of the preceding verse. Used in this way, τὴν ἐαυτοῦ σάρκα becomes synonymous with τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα of v. 28, reinforcing the idea of the wife as being, not only an intimate relative, but literally a part of the husband’s body.32 The use of σάρξ, “flesh,” anticipates the citation of Gen. 2:24 in v. 31 which refers to husband and wife becoming “one flesh,” which is then applied to the “mystery” of Christ’s loving relationship with the Church as his own flesh (5:32). The expression “for no one ever hates his own flesh” thus becomes an appeal to

31 See Barth’s lucid assessment of the scholarly discussion over γάρ (633).
32 This is different from how σάρξ is mostly used elsewhere in the letter where it takes on a pejorative meaning in reference to unredeemed human nature (2:3), or a neutral meaning in reference to what is human (2:11; 6:5). Nonetheless, the reference to Christ’s flesh in 2:14 can be read synonymously with “body.” In fact, the NRSV translates σάρξ here as “body” in a way synonymous with σῶμα, perhaps in order to make a stronger link to v. 28. Notwithstanding the NRSV’s translation here, the author of the epistle uses σάρξ to make a link to v. 31.
logic and re-states negatively the multiple positive statements regarding the love of a husband for his wife. Implicit in this expression, however, is the acknowledgment that it is indeed possible for husbands to hate their wives, even to grow bitter with them and to treat them harshly (Col. 3:19), but such treatment, in the author’s view, fails to acknowledge that a wife is one body and one flesh with her husband. When a wife is viewed, not as an extension of her husband, but as one body—one flesh—with him, a husband’s unkind treatment of his own flesh would thus be quite unreasonable, even nonsensical, as indicated by ποτε, “ever.” Instead, as the adversative conjunction ἀλλά indicates, proper reason insists that one cares for one’s body—one’s own flesh—by “nurturing” and “tenderly caring for” it.

The verb ἐκτρέφει (from ἐκτρέφω), meaning “nourishes,” or “nurtures,” is also found in 6:4 in reference to the proper way that Christian parents are to raise their children. Here in v. 29 it is coupled with θάλπει (from θάλπω, “give warmth,” “give comfort”), translated in the NAB as “cherish” and in the NRSV as “care tenderly,” and used synonymously with ἐκτρέφει. Beyond the care of a parent for a child, a verb related to ἐκτρέφω, τρέφω (“to rear, especially of children”) appears with θάλπω in a marriage contract stating the obligations of a husband toward his wife: θάλπειν καὶ

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33 According to the BDAG, the primary meaning of ἐκτρέφω is to “provide food, nourish.” A secondary meaning is “to bring up from childhood,” or “to rear.” Outside of Eph. 5:29 and 6:4, the verb ἐκτρέφω is not found in the New Testament at all; a related word, the noun τροφός, “nurse,” is found in 1 Thess. 2:7 where Paul writes to his readers that “[We were]... among you as a nursing mother (τροφός) tenderly cares for (θάλπῃ) her own children.” See the discussion below on θάλπῃ.

34 Paul uses θάλπω in 1 Thess. 2:7 to describe himself and his co-missionaries in relation to the Thessalonians metaphorically as “a nursing mother [who] tenderly cares (θάλπη) for her own children.” What Paul, of course, is saying here is that he and his co-missioners were gentle in their treatment of the Thessalonians, like a mother or a nurse tenderly caring for a child, warming it in her embrace.
τρέφειν καὶ ἱματίζειν αὐτήν, “to tenderly care for and to nurture and to clothe her.”35 In other words, the husband in this contract was expected not only to provide for his wife but also to treat her with warmth and tenderness. Of course, the two verbs, ἐκτρέφω and θάλπω, summarize what we have already seen in the preceding verses of the nurturance and tender care of Christ as “savior of the body” on behalf of the Church (v. 23): he gives himself up for her sake (v. 25) in order to sanctify her, washing her with the “bath of water in the Word” (v. 26), and to present her to himself “in glory,” without any defect (v. 27).

Yet again, the care of a husband for “his own flesh,” i.e., his wife, is to be modeled on Christ’s tender and gentle care of the Church, once more called to mind in v. 29c: καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, “just as also Christ [does] the Church,” which, as Christ’s body, is also Christ’s flesh (5:31-32). This marks the third time in this epistle that we find the expression καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς, “even as/just as also Christ.” In 5:2 the readers are told to “live in love, just as also Christ (καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς) loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Similarly, as we saw in 5:25, husbands are instructed to love their wives “just as also Christ (καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς) loved the church and gave himself up for her.” In 4:32 the audience is

35 This same expression is found in a marriage contract cited in Friedrich Preisigke, θάλπω, Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden mit Einschluß der griechischen inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder, usw., aus Ägypten (2 vols.; ed. Emil Riessling; Berlin: Selbstverlag der Erben, 1925), 1:665.
instructed to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, “just as also God (καθὼς καὶ ὁ θεὸς) has forgiven you in Christ.” 36

One additional observation must be made. To insist that a husband’s nurturance and care for his wife be modeled on that of Christ’s care for the Church is to insist that his relationship with her not be tainted by condescension or patronization. While Christ is clearly the superior partner in his relationship with the Church, yet, from the perspective of the author, his superiority expresses itself in his humble, loving service to his Bride and his total gift of self to her, as we have already seen. In fact, Christ’s exaltation is the result of his humility: “the one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things” (4:10). His exaltation is not an achievement for himself, however, but for his Bride, since he ascends to “give gifts to human beings” (4:8), and these gifts are for the “building up of the body of Christ,” until all the members of that body attain “to mature adulthood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ” (4:13). In other words, the Church is to become who Christ is—the Beloved is to become like her Lover. The ultimate aim of Christ’s tender care for his Bride is to nurture her into his own “full stature.” In the same way, then, the Christ-believing husband—the marriage partner who is given so much more status, authority, and power in Greco-Roman

36 By way of contrast, the expression καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς is found only once in Paul’s undisputed letters: Rom. 15:7, “Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you…” In the disputed letters, it is not found at all. Col. 3:13, however, uses καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος, “just as also the Lord”: “bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; just as also the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.”
society—must do the same for his own wife, raising her status to his own, yet humbly and without condescension, “just as also Christ the Church.”37

5:30: ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.38

because we are members of his body.

With verses 30-32, we come to the third and final section of the extended exhortation to husbands that begins with v. 25. These verses form a chiasm with v. 31 as its central focus, a citation from LXX Gen. 2:24. Verses 30 and 32 frame this chiasm and thus serve to reinterpret LXX Gen. 2:24 christologically as the union between Christ and his Church, which the marital code has held up all along as the model for the relationship between husband and wife:

30 ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.


32 τὸ μυστήριον τούτο μέγα ἐστίν· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

When read together with vv. 31 and 32, v. 30 becomes, more than an allusion to traditional Pauline teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ, but a reference to the

37 Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza makes a similar observation when she states that with the exhortation to husbands “patriarchal domination is thus radically questioned with reference to the paradigmatic love relationship of Christ to the church.” See Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 269-270.

38 A number of manuscripts include a citation from Gen. 2:23 (ἀκ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων αὐτοῦ) following v. 30, although numerous others, including the most ancient (𝔓66, Χ*, A, B, Origen), omit this citation. Irenaeus, however, does know the longer reading and even makes use of it in his anti-Gnostic arguments to emphasize Christ’s physical existence and bodily resurrection (Adv. Haer. 5.2.3). This prompts most scholars to agree that the longer reading is likely a second century anti-Docetic interpolation. See Gnilka, 286; Lincoln, Ephesians, 351; J. Paul Sampley, 'And the Two Shall Become One Flesh': A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 51, n. 3.
profound union that exists between Christ and his members. The citation in v. 31 from LXX Gen. 2:24 makes it clear that v. 30 refers to the union of the Lover with his Beloved. Thus, there is a correspondence between v. 30 (“we are members of his body”) and v. 32 (“This mystery is great. I am speaking of Christ and his Church”) in that the “great mystery” of v. 32 refers to the union between Christ and his Church, that is, the union between Christ and his members who together form his body. Indeed, they become “one flesh” (v. 31) with him.

Verse 30 completes the sentence begun in the previous verse and develops further the idea of a husband’s tender care for his wife—his body/flesh—as Christ cares for the Church. Indeed, with v. 30 the author offers a rationale for such tender care, as indicated by the causal conjunction ὅτι, “because”: “because we are members (μέλη) of his body.” As we have seen in the discussion on v. 23 above, this epistle repeatedly emphasizes the Church as the “body of Christ” (1:22-23; 3:6; 4:4,12,16,25; 5:23,29-30), a theme taken from Paul (Rom. 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27) and Colossians (1:18,24; 2:19; 3:15). But the author takes this idea a step further: because each one of the baptized are members of Christ’s body, not only are they profoundly connected to Christ, they are also profoundly connected to each other. It is worth noting that the word μέλη is never used in the sense of a member of an organization but instead in reference to a limb or a member of a body, whether human or animal.39 By becoming members, then, of Christ’s body, the baptized become the “members” of Christ, i.e., the foot, hand, etc., of Christ’s body. Christ, who is the “head” (1:22; 4:15; 5:23), cares for the members. In the same way, the members

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39 Hoehner, 768.
themselves are to care for each other, thus expressing Christ’s own care for each of them.

In the background is Paul’s teaching on the baptized as members of Christ’s body:

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member (ἓν μέλος) but of many” (1 Cor. 12:13-14).⁴⁰ Paul teaches that each member of the body, while distinct from the others, is important for the whole. If all the members were the same, Paul asks, “where would the body be?” (1 Cor. 12:19). The body simply would be unable to function as marvelously as it does with its wonderful diversity of members (1 Cor. 12:15-19). Yet the differences between the members do not imply inferiority; on the contrary, each of them is to enjoy honor. In fact, the “greater honor” is given to the member “without it.” This is because of the essential unity of the body where each member feels the joy or pain of the other members:

God has combined the members of the body in such a way as to give greater honor to the member without it so that there may be no dissension within the body, but that, instead, the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Cor. 12:24-27)

Paul’s point, of course, is to affirm the unity within the diversity of members in the Church, particularly the diversity of gifts. Yet Paul also wishes to point out that there are profound implications when fully reflecting on what it means to be “incorporated” into Christ. Not only are individual believers members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27) but, as such, are likewise “members of one another” (Rom. 12:5). Thus, the members of

⁴⁰ See also Gal. 3:28 which specifically includes women believers: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (NRSV).
Christ’s body are not to think of themselves as better than any other member (Rom. 12:3); instead, as “members of one another,” they must show genuine love for each other (Rom. 12:9), even “loving each other with mutual affection” and outdoing one another in giving honor (Rom. 12:10).

While elsewhere retaining Paul’s original insight into the essential unity among the diversity of gifts given in the Church as the Body of Christ (4:11-12), here in the marital code, however, the author adapts Paul’s teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ in order to develop an analogy between Christ’s care for his Church as her head and a husband’s care for his wife as her head. To be sure, when we read the marital code, particularly vv. 28-30, in the light of Rom. 12:4-5 and 1 Cor. 12:12-27, we arrive at some significant insights into the way this author views the ideal relationship between husband and wife. Verse 30, for example, must be read in the light of 4:25b, ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη, “because we are members of each other,” a re-statement of Rom. 12:5. That is to say that believers are not only members of Christ’s body (5:30/1 Cor. 12:27) but, as such, are likewise members of each other (4:25/Rom. 12:5). If this is true for all the members of the Church in general, how much more true for believing married partners who together form the basic unit of the domestic Church. Accordingly, because husband and wife, as believers, are both members of Christ’s body, they are already, in a real sense, members of each other. Yet, by virtue of their marriage commitment to each other, their unity is even more intense—together they form “one flesh” (v. 31).

This has some profound implications. The first is that a wife is not at all merely an extension of her husband. Although conventional wisdom held that a good wife ought
to lose her own identity and become absorbed in her husband, what is advocated here is not at all the loss of a wife’s self-identity or her total absorption into the world of her husband, as if she were his “satellite,” so to speak, existing under his terms, his control and direction.⁴¹ Quite the opposite—they are “members of each other” (4:25).

Consequently, her husband, likewise, is a part of her, and his body, a part of her own. In this way they indeed form “one flesh” and share “one body.” This is why, as v. 28 points out, a husband who loves his wife loves himself—the joy his love gives to her is the same joy that he himself feels; the honor and respect that he gives to his wife he gives to himself. Seen in this light, the neglect or harsh treatment of a wife would be utterly unreasonable, tantamount to neglecting or harshly treating one’s own body—“for no one ever hates his own flesh” (v. 29). On the contrary, as “members of Christ” (5:30) and thus “members of each other” (4:25), if one spouse suffers, the other suffers, too, and if one is honored, the other rejoices. Their union with Christ as members of Christ’s body implies a profound union with each other as believing husband and wife.

But that is not all. There is a second equally important implication at work here. Paul’s teaching on the Body of Christ is not simply a beautiful spiritual metaphor; it has direct consequences for sexual and marital ethics. For example, in 1 Cor. 6:15, Paul insists that also the physical body of the believer is a member of Christ: “do you not

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⁴¹ Plutarch, for example, although encouraging a sense of mutuality and partnership between husband and wife (Conj. praec. 140E.20; 143A.34), nonetheless likened the partnership between them to that of a trainer and his horse (Conj. praec. 139B.8). For Plutarch, marital concordia is dependent upon a wife’s total subordination to her husband as expressed in her complete conformity to his preferences over her own (Conj. praeccep. 139D.11), her correspondence to his moods (Conj. praec. 139F.14-140 A), her adoption of his friends and religious practices to the neglect of her own (Conj. praec. 140D.19), and her deference to his parents over hers (Conj. praec. 143B-C.36). A wife’s docile and willing conformity to her husband is what Plutarch calls “virtue” in a woman, and it is through exercising this sort of “virtue” that a wife “wins” her husband’s goodwill and affection (Conj. praec. 141C.23).
know that also your bodies are members (μέλη) of Christ?” The believer’s “incorporation” into Christ is thus all encompassing—both body and soul—and is not to be taken lightly. Paul continues, going so far as to liken the believer’s incorporation into Christ to sexual union itself (1 Cor. 6:15-16). This becomes clear in his condemnation of porneia, i.e., sexual relations for payment, as “tak[ing] the members of Christ,” i.e., the body of the individual believer, “and mak[ing] them members of a pornē,” becoming “one body with her,” even “one flesh” (1 Cor. 6:15). Instead, “the body is meant not for porneia but for the Lord and the Lord for the body” (1 Cor. 6:13). Paul’s teaching is contrary to both cultural convention and Roman law which defined adultery very narrowly as a married woman’s sexual relations with a man not her husband. In other words, from the perspective of Roman law, it was not at all illicit for a husband to have sexual relations with a slave, a prostitute, or a courtesan. Wives were even counseled to look the other way at their husband’s extramarital romantic exploits. Yet contrary to both cultural convention and the permissiveness of civil law, Paul, however, insists on a

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42 It is worth noting that, while the word pornē is often translated as “prostitute,” it could also refer to any sexually exploited female. In fact, many prostitutes were slaves and it was quite common for slaves to be exploited sexually. See F. Hauck and S. Schulz, πόρνη, κτλ., TDNT 6:580-581. For a description of the sexual exploitation of slaves, both male and female, and its acceptability in the Roman world, see Sandra Joshel, Slavery in the Roman World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 150-151. Despite its acceptability in the larger Greco-Roman world, however, Paul makes it clear in 1 Cor. 6:9 that any form of sexual relations outside of marriage—whether heterosexual or homosexual—is to be considered porneia.

43 Hauck and Schulz point out that “even the married man was permitted extra-marital intercourse as he pleased so long as he did not violate a civil marriage. On the other hand, all extra-marital intercourse was forbidden to the wife” (πόρνη, κτλ., TDNT 6:582-583). See also Judith Evans Grubbs, Women and the Law in the Roman Empire (New York: Routledge, 2002), 84.

44 Plutarch is representative of the sort of double standard in which, even as he exhorts a husband to have no sexual partners other than his own wife (Conj. praec. 144C.42; 144 D.47, 145A), he nonetheless tells a faithful wife to look the other way at her husband’s sexual dalliances (Conj. praec. 144A.41) and to “reason that it is respect for her which leads him to share his debauchery, licentiousness, and wantonness with another woman” (Conj. praec.140B.16 [Frank Cole Babbitt, LCL]).
higher moral standard for those who are incorporated into Christ. Indeed, it is worth pointing out that he directs his moral teaching (and indignation) at baptized men, since Greco-Roman men were not expected to remain sexually faithful to their wives. Of course, the author of Ephesians echoes and summarizes Paul’s moral instructions, teaching that porneia or “any uncleanness” (ἀκαθαρσία) is unfitting for the “holy ones” (5:3). In other words, as one of God’s “holy ones” (1:1,18; 2:19, 5:3) and a “member of Christ’s body” (v. 30), a Christian husband is to limit himself to the embraces of his wife alone.

Finally, placed in the context of this extended teaching directed at husbands, verse 30 then becomes a reminder to them that, as “members of Christ’s body,” they, too, have known Christ’s tender care for them. To be sure, as members of the Church, Christ has already “cleansed” them “by means of the bath of water in the word” (5:26) so that they might be “holy and blameless” (v. 27). They themselves have been the beneficiaries of his generous redemption and gracious forgiveness according to the “riches of his grace lavished upon us” (1:8). Yet this same lavish love which they have experienced as “members of his body” they must in turn extend to their wives, offering to them what they themselves have received from Christ. In this, as “members of his body,” they become as Christ as they care for their wives as “Christ does the Church” (v. 29).


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45 Cicero, for example, defends male sexual indulgence in Pro Caelio, 20.48. See the discussion on “Single and Married Men and Sexual Indulgence” in Bruce Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 68-71.
For this reason, a man will leave behind father and mother and will cleave to his wife and the two will be one flesh.

We have already observed how v. 31, a direct citation of LXX Gen. 2:24, takes center place in the chiasm formed in vv. 30-32:

30 ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.

31 ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.

32 τὸ μυστήριον τούτο μέγα ἔστιν· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

Placed between v. 30 and v. 32, the citation from LXX Gen. 2:24 in v. 31 is reinterpreted christologically so that it becomes more than a statement about human marriage but, even more, a declaration about the profound union that exists between Christ the Bridegroom and the Church as his Bride to whom he “cleaves” and with whom he forms “one flesh.” Yet verse 31 also serves to reinterpret a traditional Pauline idea regarding the Church as the Body of Christ within the analogy of Christ-Groom and Church-Bride: the members of Christ’s Body (v. 30) are united with Christ within “this great mystery” of Christ’s union with his beloved Church (v. 32). Indeed, they who are members of his Body and who thus collectively form his Church become “one flesh” with Christ himself (v. 31).

This fresh interpretation of LXX Gen. 2:24, cited directly with only some minor differences which have no real effect on meaning, is the author’s own. The expression ἀντὶ τούτου, “therefore,” are the author’s own words, replacing the LXX’s ἐνέκειν.

46 As we will see below, both traditional and Christological interpretations are at work here.
τούτου, “on account of.” 47 With ἄντι τούτου, the author introduces Gen. 2:24 to summarize the teaching of the previous verses as well as to support this teaching with the authority of scripture. 48 The frequency with which Gen. 2:24 is cited in ancient Jewish and Christian discussions indicates its importance to Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism as well as the early Church. 49 For both ancient Judaism and nascent Christianity, Gen. 2:24 explained the etiology of marriage and the mutual attraction of man and woman. Here, however, while the author retains this traditional interpretation, another layer of meaning is added so that Gen. 2:24 becomes reinterpreted christologically and ecclesiologically as referring to the relationship between Christ and the Church, as v. 32

47 For ἄντι τούτου, see LSJM, 153. For ἐνεκεν τούτου, see LSJM, 563. Ephesians 5:31 also omits αὐτοῦ from τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ. Philo’s citation of the same verse also drops the possessive pronoun αὐτοῦ. In Leg. 2.49, Philo cites LXX Gen. 2:24 as ἐνεκα . . . τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα, whereas in QG 1.29 he includes the possessive pronoun αὐτοῦ only after μητέρα: τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ. In other words, Philo is not consistent in his own citation of the same verse. Mt. 19:5 likewise cites Gen. 2:24 without αὐτοῦ after πατέρα and μητέρα, but changes ἐνεκεν to ἐνεκα as in QG. 1.29. Matthew also has κολληθήσεται τῇ γυναικί instead of προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναίκα. The citation in Mark 10:7-8 follows the Septuagintal text cited above except that it drops αὐτοῦ after μητέρα. These minor inconsistencies in the texts cited could be the result of either minor differences in the Septuagintal texts known to the different authors discussed here, or the authors’ own reconstructions of the passage from memory. Neither Philo nor the evangelists, however, use ἄντι τούτου as a synonymous substitute for ἐνεκεν τούτου, as we find here in Eph. 5:31, suggesting that it is the author’s own. For a summary of the extensive scholarly discussion over the author’s substitution of ἄντι τούτου for ἐνεκεν τούτου, see Dawes, The Body in Question, 104.

48 For a detailed study of the author’s use of the Jewish scriptures, see Sampley, One Flesh. See also Andrew Lincoln, "The Use of the OT in Ephesians," JSNT 14 (1982): 16-57.

49 Rudolf Schnackenburg, Ephesians: A Commentary (trans. Helen Heron; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 254-255. See also Sampley’s review of the use of Gen. 2:24 in both Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism, One Flesh, 51-61. The importance of this verse for the early Church is reflected in Matt. 19:3ff/Mark 10:2ff and 1 Cor. 6:16. Sampley observes that for Second Temple Jews, rabbinic writers, as for Mark and Matthew, Gen. 2:24 is interpreted as a divine ordination of marriage (56-60). Similarly, Paul uses Gen. 2:24b in the context of sexual relations. On the other hand, Philo can interpret this verse in different ways, one highly allegorical (Leg. 2.49), another more in keeping with traditional interpretations (QG 1.29). In his allegorizing, he may even completely disassociate Gen. 2:24 from any marital context whatsoever (Gig. 65).
makes clear.\textsuperscript{50} Gregory Dawes suggests that the role of Gen. 2:24 is to “bridge the gap” between both traditional and Christological-ecclesiological interpretations, “providing the ‘missing link’ in the chain of reasoning . . . developed in vv. 28-30” so that v. 31 takes on a “two-fold function.”\textsuperscript{51} Here we will discuss the first function of this verse, namely, the author’s more traditional use of Gen. 2:24. In the discussion to follow on v. 32, we will explore its second function, i.e., its Christological and ecclesiological import.

To begin with, it is worth noting that v. 31 is contrary to the general expectation of the Mediterranean world that a bride leave her mother and father to join herself to her husband’s household.\textsuperscript{52} Here, instead, it is the groom who will leave behind “father and mother” and “will cleave to” (προσκολλήσεται, from προσκολλάω, “glue on,” “be stuck to,” “cleave to”) his wife so that the two will form “one flesh” together.\textsuperscript{53} While citing Gen. 2:24 within the context of repeated exhortations to Gentile husbands to love their wives, the author offers readers a long tradition of Hellenistic Jewish interpretation in which Gen. 2:24 is alluded to as an example of a husband’s extreme love for his wife, a love which prompts him to leave behind even his own parents in order to create an even deeper bond with her. To be sure, in the first century CE world of the author, a groom’s

\textsuperscript{50} Gnilka, Der Epheserbrief, 274, 287. Gnilka writes of a “doppelsinnge[s] Schriftzitat” which has in view both traditional and christological/ecclesiological interpretations. See also Sampley, 113-114.

\textsuperscript{51} Dawes, 103.

\textsuperscript{52} Plutarch, Coni. praec. 143 B-C.36.

\textsuperscript{53} The verb κολλάω and its compound προσκολλάω are synonymous, as is seen by Mat. 19:5 which uses a form of κολλάω instead of προσκολλάω when citing Gen. 2:24. (See note 49 above.) The preposition προς may indicate intensity, but this is not certain since Koine Greek tends to prefer compounds. In the New Testament, we find κολλάω only in its middle or passive form as a derivative of κολλάσθαι, “to cleave to.” The active form of the verb means “to glue together,” “to join together,” or “to bind.” See K. L. Schmidt, κολλάω, προσκολλάω, TDNT 3:822-823.
abandonment of his parents in order to “cleave to his wife” is more metaphorical than real, but it is a popular image in Hellenistic Jewish literature, nonetheless, and symbolizes a husband’s extreme devotion to his wife. For example, in Philo’s discussion of Gen. 2:24 in *Quaestiones in Genesim (QG)*, a husband’s love for his wife becomes expressed as the “most extreme exaggeration in partnership (κοινωνία) so that he may endure to abandon even his parents.” This leave-taking of the husband’s parents, Philo says, is indeed difficult, but necessarily undertaken for his wife’s sake, since “the audacity (of man) is bolder than the nature of woman.” Similar to 1 Esdras 4:13-25 it is a man’s love for his wife that allows her to “rule” or “be lord” (κυριεύω) over him—he will do anything on account of that love. The love he has for her is greater even than that for his father and mother: “A man leaves his own father, who brought him up, and his own country, and clings (κολλᾶται) to his wife. With his wife he ends his days, with no thought of his father or his mother or his country. . . A man loves (ἀγαπᾷ) his wife more than his father or his mother” (1 Esdras 4:20,21-25, NRSV).

A similar example of a husband’s extreme love for his wife can be found in the Book of Tobit where the young Tobias literally must leave his father and mother in search of a wife. In Tobit 6:17 there is an allusion to Genesis 2:24, yet this allusion

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54 QG 29 (Ralph Marcus, LCL). Unlike the author of Ephesians, however, Philo uses this verse to insist on a wife’s unilateral subordination to her husband: the husband has “the authority of a master,” whereas the wife “taking the rank of servant, is shown to be obedient to his life.” Sampley applies a philonic exegesis to Eph. 5:31, arguing that, like Philo, the author also cites this verse to support the subordination of wives. However, Sampley offers no persuasive argument demonstrating that the author of Ephesians shares Philo’s own views. Similar to Sampley, Marlis Gielen likewise sees the citation of Gen. 2:24 in Eph. 5:31 as supporting wifely subordination, but she comes to this conclusion, not by applying a Philonic exegesis to the marital code but by reading the marital code in the light of the broader context of LXX Gen. 2. See Gielen’s *Tradition und Theologie neuentstamentlicher Haustafelethik* (Bonner Biblische Beiträge 75; Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1990), 279-280, 285. However, see the compelling arguments by Lincoln (“Use of OT,” 35-36) against Sampley’s application of a Philonic exegesis as well as Dawes’ response to Gielen, 106ff.
conveys a different aspect to the “cleaving” of a man to his wife, a love for her which
does not remain on the level of the σῶμα or body alone but includes that of καρδία,
“heart,” or the ψυχή, “soul,” in other words, his deepest core or innermost self, his mind
and will.55 This implies much more than emotional attachment, but a committed, even
“spiritual” love. It is because his love is so noble that Tobias is able to overcome the risks
involved in his marriage to Sarah.56 That Tobias’ love for Sarah is first a spiritual love is
seen in the prayer they both share together on their wedding night before consummating
their marriage, a prayer in which Tobias asserts that his love is not motivated by porneia;
it is, in fact, ἐπὶ ἀληθείας, i.e., “sincere” or “upright” (Tobit 8:7), ennobled by only the
highest intentions. In other words, for the truly righteous and good husband, as
exemplified by Tobias, a genuine and upright (i.e., ἐπὶ ἀληθείας) love for a wife requires
first a “cleaving” of his heart, mind, and soul with that of his wife in order for the two to
form “one flesh” with each other.57

55 These two words, καρδία and ψυχή, were thought to be in some sense synonymous, i.e., both
could refer not only to the center of the emotions but to the seat of the moral, religious, and intellectual life. For example, the LXX in some places translates שֶׁב as καρδία, but in other places ψυχή is used instead. The similarity between the two is seen in the manuscript tradition for Tobit 6:17: both Alexandrinus (A) and Vaticanus (B) read ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ, “his soul,” while Sinaiticus (א) has ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ, “his heart.”

The idea of union with another on the level of ψυχή can also be found in Dio Chrysostom (40-120 CE) who writes that one can be bound to others by “one soul,” μιὰν ψυχήν (Borysth. 30). In regard specifically to the context of marriage, an inscription from the first century BCE states that marital fellowship includes a sharing of life (βίος), body (σῶμα), and soul (ψυχή) (SIG 783, 33). See Johannes Behm, καρδία, TDNT, 608-610); Albert Dihle, ψυχὴ in TDNT, 611-617, especially 616. In short, καρδία of Tobit 6:17 implies much more than “heart,” or emotional attachment. It signifies what we today might call a moral or “spiritual” love, a love on the level of the will, i.e., a love committed to the good and well-being of the beloved.

56 Sarah had previously been married to seven others, each in turn struck dead on their wedding
night by the jealous demon Asmodeus.

57 In a similar way, in 1 Cor. 6:16-17, Paul uses the verb κολλάω (κολλάομαι) to signify a union
which is both sexual, forming “one body” (ἕν σῶμα), and spiritual, forming “one spirit” (ἕν πνεῦμά).
Behind the citation of Gen. 2:24, then, is a rich tradition of Hellenistic Jewish interpretation in which marriage is viewed positively, as both joy and blessing, and a husband’s love for his wife is idealized as being spiritually motivated and virtuous, capable of overcoming any obstacle with the help of God. A wife is sought with eagerness and care and given respect and honor as a valued partner, and married love is celebrated as a great good, definitely worth the sacrifices required in “leaving father and mother” and giving oneself over entirely to another even more compelling love.58

5:32: τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

This mystery is great, but I am speaking in regard to Christ and the Church.

Verse 32 completes the chiasm formed with verses 30 and 31. Without v. 32, the citation from Gen. 2:24 would remain entirely on the level of the application to the relationship between husband and wife. With v. 32, however, we see the author’s originality in providing a Christological and ecclesiological application to Gen. 2:24, one which goes well beyond traditional interpretations to offer a fresh insight into the relationship between Christ and his Church. Accordingly, “this mystery”59 is more than a reference to the union of husband and wife referred to in the citation of Gen. 2:24 in the

58 The brief discussion here on Philo (QG 29), 1 Esdras 4:13-25, and Tobit, however, is not to say that the author of Ephesians knew these particular texts, only that they are representative of ways in which marriage was viewed positively in the Hellenistic Jewish milieu known to the author.

59 A number of translations (NAB, NEB, NIV, NRSV) read μέγα, “great,” as an attributive adjective modifying τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, “this mystery”; “This is a great mystery.” Others (NJB, JB, RV, ASV, NASB) read μέγα as a predicate adjective placed before ἐστίν for greater emphasis: “This mystery is great.” The former implies the difficulty in understanding the mystery whereas the latter implies the greatness of the mystery; while there is not much difference between the two, τοῦτο, “this,” modifies μυστήριον, and thus “this mystery” would be grammatically more accurate (BAGD 498; Sampley, 86-87; Hoehner, 775; Larkin, 141). The expression τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, “this mystery,” is elsewhere found only in Daniel 2:30,47 and Romans 11:25.
previous verse. It also—and most especially—refers to the union between Christ and his Church-Bride, so that the groom in v. 31 who “cleaves to his wife” is Christ himself who “cleaves” to his Church-Bride, forming “one flesh” with her. Set as the last element of the chiastic structure of vv. 30-32, v. 32 thus offers a new way to understand v. 30, the traditional Pauline teaching that the members of the Church are Christ’s Body: they who form the Church as members of Christ’s Body (v. 30) form “one flesh” with him (v. 31). Indeed, together as a collective entity they form the Bride of Christ, the Church. As members of Christ’s Church-Body-Bride, they live in union with Christ. This union is that of Lover with his Beloved. This mystery, indeed, is great. In fact, as we will see, it is rich with profound implications for the members of the Church and how they are to respect and love each other as members of Christ’s Body.

Judging from its repeated use (1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; 6:19), the word μυστήριον, “mystery,” is noteworthy in the epistle, and used in a way qualitatively different from what is found in either Paul or Colossians. For the Paul of the undisputed letters, the “mystery of God” (1 Cor. 2:1), or the “mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1), refer to the hidden wisdom of God revealed in the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:1-7) and concern not only the salvation of Gentiles but eventually of “all Israel” (Rom. 11:26). In fact, in Paul, the particular expression τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, “this mystery,” refers to the “hardening of

60 Used six times in Ephesians, the word μυστήριον is found more frequently in this epistle than in any other work within the Pauline or deuto-Pauline corpus, with the exception of 1 Corinthians (a letter more than twice as long), where it is also used six times (1 Cor. 2:1,7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51). In Romans μυστήριον is found twice (Rom. 11:25; 16:25), and among Paul’s disputed letters it is found four times in Colossians (Col. 1:26,27; 2:2; 4:3), only once in 2 Thessalonians (2 Thes. 2:7) and twice in 1 Timothy (1 Tim. 3:9; 3:16). In 1 Cor. 4:1 Paul makes a plural reference to “the mysteries of God.” In 1 Cor. 13:2, he offers a rhetorical example of the worthlessness of “knowing all mysteries” without love, and in 1 Cor. 14:2, he refers to “the mysteries of the Spirit” in regard to speaking in tongues, mysteries which only the Spirit of God who prompts the speaker can understand.
Israel until the full number of Gentiles has come in” (Rom. 11:25). What is more, for
Paul, there is a future eschatological element to the “mystery” regarding the resurrection
of the dead by which the “perishable body must put on imperishability” and the “mortal
body immortality” (1 Cor. 15:51-54), something not found at all in Ephesians. 61

Unlike Paul, for both Colossians and Ephesians there is only one mystery in view,
ever the plural “mysteries.” The single mystery in Colossians is referred to variously as
“this mystery, which is Christ in you” (Col. 1:27), “Christ, the mystery of God” (Col.
2:2), or simply, “the mystery of Christ” (Col. 4:3). Previously “hidden throughout the
ages,” the mystery is “now revealed to God’s holy ones” (Col. 1:26), i.e., members of the
Church. The expression in Col. 1:27, “this mystery,” is likely borrowed from Rom.
11:25, yet it does not refer to Israel or its hardening, per se, as in Romans, but rather to
the correct interpretation of “the Word of God,” an interpretation which has been
entrusted to Paul that he might make it known to the Gentiles (Col. 1:25-26). Although in
Colossians it is never fully developed or explained, by implication, the “mystery of
Christ” for which Paul is imprisoned concerns his insistence on the full inclusion of the
Gentiles into the Church without the requirement of Torah observance.

Unlike anything we see in Paul, and developing much further Colossians’ single

61 There are other subtle yet significant differences as well between Paul and Ephesians regarding
how each uses the word μυστήριον. While both describe the “mystery” as something unknown in the past
(Eph. 3:5,9//Rom.16:25) but now proclaimed by Paul (Eph. 3:3; 6:19//1 Cor. 2:1), nonetheless, the Paul of
the undisputed letters never claims so boldly that “the mystery was revealed to him” as does the
pseudonymous Paul of Eph. 3:3. Instead, the mystery is “proclaimed” by Paul (1 Cor. 2:1//Eph. 6:19) and
he and his co-workers are “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). These “stewards” become
idealized in Ephesians as “holy apostles and prophets” to whom God has revealed the mystery (3:5)
previously revealed to Paul (3:3). Another subtle difference is seen between Romans 16:25-26 and Eph.
3:3-4 where in Romans the “mystery” is revealed through “the writings of the prophets” while in Ephesians
it is disclosed upon reading Paul’s letters. Further, unlike in Ephesians where the word “mystery” is always
singular, Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians of “mysteries” (1 Cor. 4:1; 13:2; 14:2).
“mystery of Christ,” in Ephesians “this mystery” is cosmic in scope. It was unknown to previous generations (3:5,9) but was given to Paul “by revelation” (3:3) and now revealed, not to the “holy ones” as in Col. 1:26, but to “the holy apostles and the prophets” (3:5) i.e., church founders such as Paul and his co-missionaries and the leaders who succeed them, promoting Paul’s teachings. Thus, the mystery is no longer secret. Knowledge of this mystery and Paul’s own insight into it are available through a careful reading of Paul’s letters (3:3-4). The mystery is revealed “so that through the Church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the principalities and authorities (ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις) in the heavenly places” (3:10). Here in v. 32b, Paul’s authority is evoked pseudonymously (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω) to support the author’s Christological interpretation of Gen. 2:24 as the “great mystery” of Christ’s union with his Church. Finally, in 6:19, the pseudonymous Paul again appears to ask his readers to pray for him that he might “make known the mystery of the Gospel with boldness.” It would seem that different “mysteries” are referred to here: the “mystery of God’s will” regarding Christ’s cosmic headship (1:9), the “mystery of Christ” regarding the union of Jews and Gentiles (3:3-6), and here in v. 32 the mystery of Christ’s spousal love for the Church. Despite these various “mysteries,” in every case in which the word μυστήριον, “mystery,” is found in Ephesians, it is always used in the singular. Moreover, each of these descriptions of “mystery” has a common link—Christ’s work of redemption achieved by his blood. By implication, then, there is only one mystery, the “mystery of
Christ” (3:4), also referred to as the “mystery of the Gospel” or “the Good News” (6:19).

This single mystery, however, has profound implications for the various levels of the cosmos. On the macrocosmic level, the “mystery,” specifically, the “mystery of God’s will” (1:9), concerns the unification of all the elements of τὰ πάντα,⁶³ that is, the entire cosmos—“things in the heavens and things on earth”—under the loving, just, and powerful headship of Christ, made possible by “the redemption through his blood” (1:7-10).⁶⁴ On the level of the πολιτεία τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (2:12), the universal Church as the inheritor of Israel, the “mystery” concerns the reconciliation achieved through Christ’s blood of Jews and Gentiles, and their union as “one new humanity created in Christ” (2:15). Now here in v. 32b, with the author’s fresh interpretation of Gen. 2:24, we see yet a third way of presenting the cosmic scope of the “mystery,” that of the union of Christ with his Church-Bride.

⁶² The expression used here, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, can be understood as either “the mystery of the Gospel” or “the mystery of the Good News.” The word εὐαγγέλιον, often translated as “Gospel,” literally means “glad tidings” or “good news.” Elsewhere, Ephesians refers to τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς σωτηρίας ὑμῶν, “the gospel of your salvation” (1:13), and τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς εἰρήνης, “the gospel of peace” (6:15).


⁶⁴ The word used here in 1:10, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι, has κεφαλή, “head” as its root. Its lexical meaning is usually rendered “to be summed up,” as with an argument or a speech (LSIJ, 108; BDAG, 55-56). The only other place where this word is found in either the LXX or the New Testament is in Rom. 13:9 where Paul uses it when citing Lev. 19:18 as a summary of the Ten Commandments. Some translations such as the NAB follow this lexical meaning, but the context here is not a summary for a speech or argument. Instead, ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι in Ephesians is used in the context of the headship of Christ over the cosmos (1:22), and thus the unity that the entire cosmos finds under Christ’s rule.
This, of course, is the great cosmic mystery: Christ’s union with his Church. All the various “layers,” or “parts,” of the macrocosm are envisioned here: what is in the heavens and what is on earth united under Christ’s headship—τὰ πάντα (1:9-10); the one new universal humanity created in Christ—the politeia of Israel (2:10-22); the household—the basic unit of the Church (5:21-6:9). All of this together forms the cosmic Church (1:23). By looking carefully at how the word “mystery” is used in Ephesians, what comes into view is something resembling ancient ideas of cosmology, so that what happens on the macrocosmic level is reflected in the many microcosms that form the one cosmos, and vice versa. In other words, by observing the part, one grasps insight into the whole, and by viewing the whole, one comprehends the part.\(^6\) This has important implications for the marital code. By linking Gen. 2:24 to the loving relationship between Christ and his Church as elaborated upon throughout the marital code, the author stresses that this “great mystery” of Christ’s boundless love, cosmic in scope (1:9-10; 2:10-22), is to have its exact parallel on the microcosmic scale of domestic relations. Just as the household church, a microcosm of the larger cosmic Church, is to reflect the harmony and goodwill that pervade the macrocosm under Christ’s cosmic headship (4:17-5:21), so, too, the most basic unit of the cosmos itself, the Christian household (5:21-6:9), must

\(^6\) The notion of the universe as being a macrocosm composed of various microcosms had been a widespread idea for centuries before the development of Christianity. According to M. R. Wright, this idea, traceable to the pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus, becomes developed in various cosmological models in the different ancient schools of philosophy. As Wright explains, “the individual could be regarded as an ordered system comparable to the whole in its composite matter and psychic principle, and the cosmos as a great organism, a massive expansion of a similar elemental arrangement infused with vital powers, and often with reason and control attributed to it. Between the two stood the body politic—the individual ‘writ large’ and a small-scale cosmos . . . Private morality, civic and natural law and cosmic order might be viewed as intrinsically related. Other organisations, such as a household, a theatre or an army, also appeared as medians between the smaller and the greater, analogous in different respects to the cosmos.” See M. R. Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 56.
image the heavenly household of God where all members are lavished with love, without distinction. Included here is the “most elemental relationship” of the earthly household, that of husband and wife, which likewise must reflect the broadest, most macrocosmic relationship of all, that of the mutually loving union shared between the cosmic Christ and his cosmic body and bride, the Church.

5:33: πλὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ καθ’ ἕνα, ἕκαστος τῆν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα οὕτως ἀγαπάτω ὡς ἑαυτόν, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἵνα φοβήται τὸν ἄνδρα.

In any case, also you, let each one of you individually so love his own wife as himself, and the wife, that she respect her husband.

Here with v. 33 we come to the fourth and final segment of the marital code, the concluding exhortation to both husbands and wives. We saw above how v. 33 forms an inclusio with v. 21 and the idea of “fear.” We also saw how both verses address both married partners:

A' 33 πλὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ καθ’ ἕνα, ἕκαστος τῆν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα οὕτως ἀγαπάτω ὡς ἑαυτόν, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἵνα φοβήται τὸν ἄνδρα.

The correspondence between v. 21 (A) and v. 33 (A') is seen in the way both verses address husband and wife together, with v. 21 offering the initial exhortation of the marital code, the exhortation to mutual subordination, and v. 33 offering the summary exhortation, namely, that each husband love his wife as himself and that a wife respect (literally, “fear”67) her husband.

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66 Cicero, De officiis 1.54.

67 See the discussion on “fear” below.
While the word \( \pi\lambda\eta \nu \) can be adversative (“however,” “but,” “only,” “nevertheless,” “in spite of that”), here it is used in a transitional sense to introduce a summary to the discussion and to emphasize its main point.\(^{68}\) The καὶ (“likewise,” but more literally, “and, “also”), used here adverbially to show addition,\(^{69}\) links the exhortation given to husbands in v. 33 with the preceding discussion of the mystery of Christ’s love for his Church-Bride and the citation of Gen. 2:24 in v. 31. The author wants to be sure that the exhortation is not given generally but rather specifically directed to each Christian husband: οἱ καθ᾽ ἑνα, ἑκαστος, “each one of you,” or “each one individually.” The emphasis on each individual husband stresses individual responsibility.\(^{70}\) It is to make clear that there are no exceptions: this is an exhortation which is applied equally to each husband in every circumstance of marriage. Each husband is addressed with an imperative command to love, ἀγαπάτω, emphasizing the author’s insistence on the husband’s obligation to love his “own wife.” The ἑαυτοῦ (“own”) of τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα (“his own wife”) emphasizes the exclusive fidelity demanded in the husband’s love for his wife. The οὕτως, “so,” is coupled with ὡς ἑαυτόν, “as himself,” recalling the teaching in vv. 28-31 on the unity of husband and wife, a unity so profound as to make them members of one body, indeed, “one flesh.” Thus, in the broader context provided by vv. 28-31, this is more than a mere echo of the command in Lev. 19:18 to love one’s neighbor as oneself. The husband is commanded once more to

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\(^{68}\) BDAG, 826.1; Lincoln, Ephesians, 384; Best, 557.

\(^{69}\) Larkin, 142.

\(^{70}\) Hoehner, 781.
love his wife for she is his own body.\footnote{71}

The wife, in turn, is exhorted to respect her husband.\footnote{72} Unlike her husband who is commanded to love her, she is not the object of an imperative verb or a command. Instead, an indirect command is given to her with φοβήται, the third person singular subjunctive of φοβέομαι (literally, “to be afraid”) preceded by ἵνα “[so] that”: “that she respect”\footnote{73} or “be in awe of”\footnote{74} her husband. Most commentators who believe the marital code begins with 5:21 have observed that the use of φοβέομαι here creates an inclusio with ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ in v. 21.\footnote{75} Just as we noted in the discussion on v. 21 above, the use of φόβος (the noun) or φοβέομαι (the verb) indicates the acknowledgment of superior status by someone of lower social rank. In that context, it connotes an attitude of subordination. To be sure, outside this elaborate passage with its multiple demands of a husband’s self-sacrificial love after the manner of Christ, v. 33 would clearly imply a wife’s unilateral subordination. Yet within the context set by the exhortation in v. 21 to mutual subordination, conventional and traditional notions of dominance and subjection no longer have a place within either a Christian marriage or the Christian household.

\footnote{71}{See the discussion on v. 28 above.}

\footnote{72}{From our perspective today, it does seem odd, however, that the wife is not exhorted to love her husband. Later Christian literature, however, does stress the importance of a wife’s love for her husband. The second century CE letter by Polycarp to the Philippians counsels wives to love their husbands (Pol. 4:2), while the early second century letter of Ignatius to Polycarp counsels Polycarp to “instruct my sisters to love the Lord and be satisfied with their husbands in flesh and spirit” (Ig. Pol. 5:1 [Bart D. Ehrman, Loeb]).}

\footnote{73}{According to Zerwick (Biblical Greek, §415), this is an imperatival use of ἵνα followed by the subjunctive. Though not known in Classical Greek, it was used in Koine. See Maximilian Zerwick, Biblical Greek (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2005), 141-142.}

\footnote{74}{LSJM, 1946.}

\footnote{75}{Sampley, for example, notes that “verse 33 provided the first clear evidence that 5:21-33 must be considered as a literary unit whose interpretation must reflect that unity” (One Flesh, 147).}
There is no doubt that, culturally, to use the same language for husbands as for wives (ἵνα φοβῆται, literally, “to fear”) would be out of order, too much of a stretch for the patriarchal culture of the epistle’s Greco-Roman audience.

Perhaps for this reason, the language of love is repeatedly emphasized, both throughout the marital code and again here in the final verse. This would be a bit more palatable for Greco-Roman men. Nonetheless, a husband’s obligation to love his wife is described in such a way as to draw attention to how Christ loves his Church-Bride: as his own body/flesh, giving himself up for her, ennobling her, esteeming her, and raising her status so that she, too, sits with him in the glory of his home in the heavenly places (2:6). This is how a husband is commanded to love his wife. And this command is restated three different times throughout the marital code, with the final command in v. 33 making it clear that this is not a general command, but intended for each husband, individually.

Accordingly, in the context of the larger passage, the wife’s subordination to her husband in vv. 22-24, re-stated and summarized here in v. 33, expresses, not subservience but, on the contrary, a profound respect which acknowledges the gift of her husband’s loving service and tender care for her, given according to the pattern of Christ’s own extreme of love in service to his Church-Bride.

**Summary and Conclusions**

We already observed in Chapter Two that the exhortation to husbands in Eph. 5:25-33 comprises the longest segment of the household code. The analogy with Christ and the Church, first introduced in 5:23-24, is developed in much greater detail in 5:25-32. This, along with the three different commands to husbands to love their wives, as well
as the extended instruction on what genuine love requires, all suggest that the author of Ephesians wants to be sure that Gentile Christian husbands do not miss the author’s point, namely that, by virtue of their baptism—their very incorporation into Christ’s body—an entirely new way of relationship is now required of them. In the verses just prior to the marital code, all were told of how they were to relate to each other as mutually subordinate members of the Church. Here, in the marital code, the author takes great pains to emphasize that, for Christian husbands, this new way of relationship extends even to their wives.

This is done in a number of ways. We saw earlier how the author revises Col. 3:18 into an exhortation to mutual subordination in 5:21, composing v. 21 in such a way as to link worship and the home together: what is celebrated in the household church must be lived out at home. And while the author does not (dare not?) eliminate the centuries old Greco-Roman expectation that wives be subordinate to their husbands, the exhortation to wifely subordination in v. 22 is linked syntactically and conceptually to the initial exhortation to mutual subordination in v. 21 which grammatically must include husbands. What is more, the exhortation to wifely subordination becomes recontextualized within the analogy of Christ and the Church in vv. 23-24: as the Church is subordinate to Christ, so should wives be subordinate to their husbands. The rationale offered for a wife’s subordination is another centuries old Greco-Roman notion: a husband is head of his wife. Yet to this very traditional statement, a new element is added: a husband is head of his wife as Christ is head of his Church. Christ’s headship, however, is described in terms of being “savior of his body.” Of course, it is clear from
the rest of the epistle that Christ’s body is his Church (1:23; 3:6; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,29,30).

In the extended exhortation to husbands immediately following in vv. 25ff, the author describes what Christ’s headship accomplishes as “savior of his body” and, in so doing, offers a fresh context for understanding a husband’s headship and relationship to his wife.

To begin with, after the first injunction to husbands to love their wives (v. 25), the author draws an immediate comparison with Christ’s love for his Church, presented in the marital code as Christ’s bride. Christ’s love for his bride is one of total cost and complete self-gift: “he gave himself up for her,” a reference to his death on a cross. For an audience likely familiar with a collection of Paul’s letters (Eph. 3:3-4), the message is clear: they are baptized into Christ’s death and thereby made to be sharers with Christ in his new resplendent life, taking on a new identity, a Christ-identity, so that the new person they have become through their baptism is based on the pattern of Christ’s own way of living and loving. To put it another way, Christ’s death has a purpose and brings powerful benefits to the baptized: adoption as God’s children, redemption through Christ’s blood, the forgiveness of sins, all “according to the riches of God’s grace lavished” upon them (1:5-8). The power of God at work in raising Christ from the dead is also at work on behalf of the baptized (1:19-20). It is this same power which brings those deadened through sin to new life with Christ in baptism (2:5). As the baptized, they form

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76 See the discussion in Chapter 5 on the collection of Paul’s letters likely available at the time of the author of Ephesians.

77 Ephesians presupposes the teachings found in Rom. 6:3-11; Gal. 3:27; 5:24; 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17, and Col. 3:10, alluded to and summarized throughout the epistle but with especially clear parallels in Eph. 2:15 and 4:24. By the time Colossians is written, Paul’s own future eschatology (i.e., the future resurrection of the baptized in Rom. 6:5) is de-emphasized and the present effects of baptism, i.e., the new life in Christ already available to the baptized, become emphasized (Col. 2:12; 3:1,10). Ephesians retains and even develops Colossians’ emphasis on present eschatology.
the Church, imaged in the marital code not only as Christ’s body but also as his bride. In the exhortation to husbands, the teaching discussed earlier in the epistle on the achievements of Christ’s death and resurrection is alluded to and summarized with the image of Christ as groom who “gives himself up” for the Church, his bride, humbly stooping to take the lowest position by washing her as would a servant (5:25-26). His careful and tender washing, i.e., baptism, makes his bride altogether beautiful, and becomes the means by which she is sanctified and exalted with him, sharing in his new life and seated with him in the heavenly places (5:27-26; 2:6). By assuming a position of humility and lowliness, Christ raises the status of his beloved bride to his own high place of exaltation. Yet, it is only through his descent, through giving up his originally high position for the sake of love, that Christ ascends (4:8-13). Indeed, in the household of God, the one who holds the highest rank serves all the others. Christ’s service is for the promotion and growth of his beloved, empowering his Church to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” with a growth that “builds itself up in love,” until the whole Church comes “to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (4:13-16). As Christ’s bride, the Church is “one flesh” with him (5:31-32). Christ’s union with his bride is so profound that there is no longer any distinction between himself and his Church. Thus, Christ’s headship is not about promoting himself, his own power, rank, status, or superiority. On the contrary, as head of the Church and “savior of his body,” he serves his Church, not himself; he raises her status, not his own; he makes her like who he is, holy and beloved of God (1:6; 5:1). He empowers her to reach full maturity, even to his own “full stature” (4:13). And he does this because he and she form “one flesh”
together and “no one ever hates his own flesh but nurtures and tenderly cares for it” (5:29).

By contextualizing the relationship between husband and wife within the analogy of Christ as head and husband and the Church as Christ’s body and bride, the author retains the traditional idea of a husband’s headship while re-describing it. Yes, a Christian husband is head of his wife, but this requires that he love her as Christ-Head-Husband loves his dearly beloved Church-Body-Bride. Moreover, a husband must not forget that this love is costly—it cost Christ everything: not only his rank and high position, but even his life. Perhaps this is why a husband is commanded three separate times—at the beginning of the exhortation to husbands, in the middle, and at its conclusion—to love his wife. These are not offered as suggestions or as advice, but as commands. Christ’s love for his Church defines how a Christian husband is to love his wife with whom he forms “one flesh” (5:28-31): he “gives himself up for her.” Christ’s example demonstrates how a Christian head ought to function: he relinquishes his higher status and takes on the role of a servant so as to “nurture and tenderly care for his body,” promoting its growth, empowering it to achieve full maturity and status. In this way a husband’s headship becomes redefined, not in terms of authority, control, or domination, but as servant leadership. In the microcosm of the Christian household, just as in the macrocosmic household of God, it is the highest in rank who serves.

What we see then is a vertical relationship in reverse: after the pattern of Christ, the husband as head serves his wife for the sake of love. In this way, a traditionally patriarchal and top-down vertical relationship becomes inverted into a bottom-up
relationship as the head, the husband, gives up his rank and status to serve his wife, “giving himself up” for her sake. This he does, like Christ, as an expression of the value and esteem in which he holds his wife. Yet willingly she meets him there, at that same level, in her own voluntary subordination to him “as to the Lord” (5:22). Because the two together now meet at the same place—the place from “below,” the place of subordination, their relationship shifts from vertical to horizontal as both become subordinate to each other, the head to the body and the body to the head. This is because, in the household of God, there is no real rank or higher status of one over another. All God’s children, daughters as well as sons, have already been exalted by Christ himself in baptism. Here, in their shared exaltation, both God’s daughters and sons are given equal dignity and status as together they enjoy the highest seat with Christ in his heavenly home (2:6) where all are esteemed and loved members of his body, without exception. In giving to his members a new dignity, a new identity as God’s holy ones, and a new home, Christ likewise gives them a whole new reality, a whole new way of living with each other, of relating to each other, where vertical relationships become transformed into the mutual subordination of the sons and daughters of God. In their new home Christ alone is Lord, and together as Church they willingly subordinate themselves to him in everything (5:24), while he himself, the beloved groom and head, comes to them as the one who serves.

This view of the Christian household and, in particular, the Christian marriage relationship, is what the author of Ephesians offers in Paul’s name to a Gentile Christian audience, particularly to Gentile Christian men. Yet to what extent can it be said that the
idea of mutual subordination among husbands and wives is from Paul himself? Or is it, instead, an adaptation from Paul or, perhaps, even the author’s own original idea? In search of answers, in the next chapter we will examine Paul’s teachings as found in his undisputed letters in order to learn how Paul himself views the role of women and wives—does he see them as subordinate to or on the same level as Christian men? Only by looking at Paul will we be able to assess to what extent the author holds onto Paul’s own teachings and in what way the author adapts and reshapes them for a new generation of Gentile Christians.
CHAPTER FIVE
PAUL’S VIEWS ON
SUBORDINATION, MARRIAGE, AND GENDER RELATIONS
IN HIS UNDISPUTED LETTERS

Introduction

In the last chapter we observed how the author of Ephesians re-contextualizes the relationship of husband and wife within the analogy of Christ and his Church. Christ’s love, the author points out, is the love of “giving himself up” for the sake of his bride, a love which stoops down to serve her, a love which highly esteems her and raises her status. Christ’s headship is exercised in self-sacrificing service to his beloved bride. With Christ as the standard and model, a Christian husband is told to love his wife in the same way that Christ loves his Church; so, too, his headship is to be exercised in loving service to his wife just as Christ’s headship expresses itself in loving service to his beloved Church. A Christian wife, of course, is instructed to imitate the Church’s voluntary subordination to Christ in her own willing subordination to her husband. With this analogy of Christ and his Church, the author re-shapes, so to speak, traditional Greco-Roman notions of a husband’s headship over his wife and the cultural expectation of a wife’s docile subordination to her husband’s authority. In this way, a traditionally Greco-Roman vertical relationship shifts as both husband and wife become mutually subordinate to each other as baptized members of Christ’s body, a husband in loving
service to his wife and a wife in reciprocal subordination. This is because of the equal
dignity and status they both share as God’s beloved children, each having been made
holy and beautiful through the Servant Christ’s washing them with his bath of water, i.e.,
baptism.

To what extent, however, does the author of Ephesians, who claims to write a
letter from Paul, incorporate traditions inherited from Paul in regard to a mutually
subordinate marital relationship? Or, instead, to what extent does the author adapt,
develop, or perhaps even revise Paul’s teachings? Considering that Colossians, too,
claims to be a letter from Paul, and that there are some problematic passages even in
Paul’s undisputed letters, what on the surface appears as a simple question is really
much more complex. First of all, we must determine, insofar as is possible, how much of
Paul’s correspondence is known to the author, and in what form. Is it fair even to
presume that what we have today in regard to Paul’s letters was available to the author, or
even used by the author? Secondly, we must look at Paul’s views on women’s roles in his
letters, especially their role vis à vis that of Christian men. Paul says some important
things about women leaders in his churches, and at least two of these, Prisca and Junia,
are wives. Does Paul ever describe women leaders as subordinate to male church

1 It is beyond the purview of this study to review how the author of Ephesians uses Pauline
material beyond the marital code. For a broader discussion of Ephesians’ use of Pauline tradition
throughout the epistle, see Michael Gese, Das Vermächtnis des Apostels: Die Rezeption der paulinischen
Theologie im Epheserbrief (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997). Gese takes a thematic approach to his
study of Ephesians’ use of Pauline theology and does not examine the relationship between the marital
code of Eph. 5:21-33 and the undisputed letters of Paul.

2 See, for example, the discussion below on 1 Cor. 11:3-16 and 1 Cor. 14:34-35.

3 Rom. 16:3,7. See the discussions on Prisca and Junia below. Philologus and Julia (Rom. 16:15)
may be another husband/wife team.
members by virtue of their gender alone? This brings us to a third consideration, namely, what does Paul himself have to say about the marital relationship? This last consideration is related to the previous one regarding women’s leadership roles in Paul’s churches in that the subordinate role of wife to husband was part of a larger societal view of women reflected in Aristotelian teaching that a man was “born to rule” and a woman was “born to be ruled.”

Paul’s views on women leaders, then, offers insight into his views on women in general (and wives, too, since the same Greek word, γυνή, means both woman and wife). In other words, to what extent does Paul accept this pervasive view of gender relations of his day, and in what ways does he challenge it? Only by knowing Paul’s own views on women and wives will we be able to understand in what way the author of Ephesians uses, adapts, and perhaps even reshapes Pauline tradition when writing the marital code. In this present chapter we will examine in detail what Paul himself has to say on the issue of gender relations, particularly in regard to the subordination of women to men, and especially what he has to say about the Christian marital relationship. After first looking at Paul’s own teachings, we will then be in a position to assess in Chapter Six how the author of Ephesians makes use of the traditions inherited from Paul, noting in particular what the author retains from Paul as well as what the author changes and adapts.

Paul’s Letter Collection Known to the Author of Ephesians

First of all, what are the letters from within the Pauline tradition that the author of Ephesians likely knew and used for source material? Besides Colossians, there are

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4 Politics, 1.1259b; 1.2.12. See the discussion on the word κεφαλή in Chapter Three as well as notes 35 and 36 in that chapter.
numerous clear allusions and parallels found throughout Ephesians to all seven of Paul’s undisputed letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon).\(^5\) In fact, these many parallels and allusions between Ephesians and Paul’s undisputed letters not only suggest that the author knew them, but also that these letters had already been gathered into a collection at an early date.\(^6\) On the other hand, when it comes to 2 Thessalonians and the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus), however, there are no convincing parallels.\(^7\) In other words, because there is no substantial evidence that the author of Ephesians knows or uses them, these other letters in the Pauline corpus (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 2 Thessalonians) must be discarded as possible sources.

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\(^6\) Noting the widespread practice in the Roman world of making copies of one’s correspondence in notebooks of parchment, E. Randolph Richards makes a compelling argument that the initial collection of Paul’s letters was made from his own notebook copies. See Richards’ helpful research on the development of ancient letter collections and the implications for the collection of the Pauline corpus, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004). (Richards’ second argument, namely, that the collection of Paul’s letters which we have today comes from Paul himself without later scribal redactions or interpolations, is less compelling for the reasons offered below.) See also Stanley E. Porter’s helpful summary of the various theories regarding the compilation and collection of Paul’s letters, "When and How was the Pauline Canon Compiled? An Assessment of Theories," in *The Pauline Canon* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 95-128.

\(^7\) Johnston (111) notes three weak parallels with 2 Thessalonians, but the first (2 Thess. 2:14/ Eph. 1:14) is the use of the same word only, while the remaining two are also shared with Colossians and 1 Thessalonians (2 Thess. 1:9/Eph. 6:10/Col. 1:11; 2 Thess. 1:11/ Eph. 4:1/ 1 Thess. 2:12), making the parallels with 2 Thessalonians dubious. Regarding Ephesians and the Pastorals, there are no clear parallels beyond some shared vocabulary. Any relationship between them can be explained in terms of the dependence of the Pastorals on Ephesians. In fact, C. Leslie Mitton maintains that Ephesians is already “known and influential in Asia Minor by A.D. 90 or very soon after” and is therefore likely known to the author of the Pastorals who borrows its vocabulary and idiosyncratic phraseology. See Mitton’s discussion of the dependence of the Pastorals upon Ephesians in his *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 173-175. In other words, the most convincing parallels between Ephesians and other letters in the Pauline corpus are with all of Paul’s undisputed letters and Colossians, not 2 Thessalonians or the Pastorals. For this reason, the focus of this chapter will be Paul’s undisputed letters.
This latter consideration leads us to acknowledge that Paul’s letter collection underwent a number of editorial changes after his death, both in regard to the addition of pseudonymous letters incorporated into the collection as well as the individual letters themselves. Expanded editions of the letter collection would have included letters not found in previous collections, until the collection became fixed sometime in the late second or early third century with the final addition of the Pastorals (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus). This would explain why Ephesians does not know the Pastorals—they had not yet been composed and included in Paul’s letter collection. Not only that, but Paul’s letters themselves offer evidence of no small amount of redaction and editing. Both 2 Corinthians and Philippians, for example, are likely compilations of other letters from Paul that were merged together for the sake of convenience. Thus, given the textual evidence for editorial changes to even Paul’s genuine correspondence, we cannot presume that the collection we have today of Paul’s undisputed letters and Colossians matches exactly what the author of Ephesians had at hand. In fact, given what we have

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8 There is no consensus about the development of Paul’s letter collection. Besides the dependence of Ephesians upon Paul’s undisputed letters (see note 5 above), Colossians also shows a dependence upon Paul’s undisputed letters. (See E. P. Sanders, "Literary Dependence in Colossians," *JBL* 85 [1966]: 28-45). This is in contradistinction to the undisputed letters for which there is no evidence of literary dependence upon any another, let alone several (Sanders, 30). The fact that both Colossians and Ephesians know all seven undisputed letters of Paul but none of the other pseudonymoi suggests that Paul’s undisputed letters had been formed into a collection at an early date. The Pastorals, unknown to the earliest collections of Paul’s letters (Marcion’s in the second century and ᮧ, generally dated between the mid-second and early third centuries), were a separate collection and added onto the larger collection of Paul’s letters much later. For recent discussions regarding the development of Paul’s letter collection, see Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 23-61; Porter, "When and How was the Pauline Canon Compiled?" 95-128; Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*; David Trobisch, *Paul’s Letter Collection* (Bolivar, Mo.: Quiet Waters Publications, 2001); Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995).

9 Stanley Porter rightly laments the ease with which scholars discuss the Pauline letters with little or no consideration as to their composite character (as in the case of the Corinthian correspondence and
already seen in Chapter Three in regard to the textual history of Eph. 5:22 and how it becomes subject to the editorial changes of later scribes and copyists, there is no reason to think that any of Paul’s genuine letters would be immune to similar editorial changes after Ephesians had been written and incorporated into a late first century edition of the letter collection. On the contrary, according to William O. Walker Jr., interpolations, compilations, and “heavily edited” redactions were commonplace in ancient literature, whether with the correspondence of well-known philosophers and moralists such as Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, or Seneca, or literati such as Homer, Hippocrates, and Thucydides. Thus, Walker insists that

there is no reason to assume that the Pauline letters would have been less subject to textual expansion than were other documents that now comprise the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian New Testament. Moreover, as a possible precedent, the presence of interpolations has already been noted in the Hellenistic literary genre most closely resembling the Pauline corpus: the letters of philosophers and moralists to their disciples. By way of summary and conclusion: the presence of interpolations in other ancient literature—Classical, Hellenistic, Jewish, and Christian—would lead us to expect, simply on a priori grounds, that the Pauline letters, as we now have them, are likely to contain non-Pauline interpolations.11

Elsewhere Walker lists many possible interpolations identified by various exegetes: 1 Thess. 2:13-16; 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 2:6-16; 11:2-16; 1 Cor. 13; 1 Cor. 14:33b-36; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Rom 1:19-2:1; 3:24-26; 5:6-7; 13:1-7;16:25-27.12 Walker’s observations warn us that,

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10 See the discussion on Eph. 5:22 in Chapter Three.


12 See William O. Walker, "Text Critical Evidence for Interpolations in the Letters of Paul," CBQ 50 (1988): 622-631, esp. 622-623. Walker’s list is not exhaustive, nor is there unanimous agreement regarding suggested interpolations. (See the discussion below.)
just as with the writings of any other author, ancient scribes and copyists also subjected
Paul’s own letters to editorial changes. We must therefore proceed with due care and with
an honest acknowledgment of the difficulty inherent in assessing traditions inherited from
Paul even through his undisputed correspondence. Nonetheless, the task is not impossible
and much can still be gleaned from Paul’s genuine letters, albeit with caution.

Paul and the Subordination of Women

With the above caveats in mind, what does Paul himself have to say about the
subordination of women or wives? There are three different ways to approach this
question. The first is to look at 1 Cor. 14:34-35, the only place in Paul’s undisputed
letters where women are unambiguously told to be subordinate to their husbands, and in a
way which forbids them even to speak “in the churches.” Here subordination is equated
with women’s silence and a docile deference to male authority because it is “shameful for
a woman to speak in the church.” By virtue of their gender, women are presumed as
having nothing to say in the church that is worth men’s thoughtful attention. However,
given the problems described above in regard to later interpolations in the text of Paul’s
letters, there are two other ways by which one must approach the question regarding what
Paul has to say about women and subordination. A second approach, then, must also look
at Paul’s discussion throughout his letters regarding his women co-workers. Is there
anything in how Paul writes about them that would suggest that he thought women
should be subordinate to the men by virtue of their gender? In all the other places where
he writes about women, particularly women leaders in his churches, does he demand their
silent submission and docility to male authority? A third approach is to look at Paul’s
teaching on marriage. How does he view the marriage relationship? When discussing the relationship between husband and wife, does Paul in any way encourage a wife’s subordination? In other words, in all that Paul has to say about the women leaders in his churches, or the husband-wife relationship, is there anything at all that coheres with 1 Cor. 14:34-35? If so, then that would certainly support 1 Cor. 14:34-35 as original and authentic teaching from Paul. If not, if instead we find contradiction, then we must examine 1 Cor. 14:34-35 for evidence that it may be an interpolation, something not original to Paul but added on by a later scribe or copyist.

Paul mentions by name many women leaders throughout his letters. Of special interest is the large group of women whom Paul mentions in Romans 16, particularly the way that Paul either describes or greets them. This offers important clues to how he understood women’s roles in the early churches, principally women’s leadership roles. Much ink has been spilled on discussions of the women in Romans 16, nine referred to by name out of twenty-nine persons mentioned, mostly because of the variety of titles Paul uses in reference to them. Paul’s high esteem and value for these women whose ministry has been of benefit to him is apparent in the respectful and warm way in which he refers to them: Phoebe, deacon and patroness; Prisca, a “fellow worker” who, along with her husband Aquila, “risked their necks” for Paul; Mary, who has “worked very

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13 Beyond the nine women mentioned by name in Rom. 16 (see the discussion below), there are also Euodia and Syntyche in Phil. 4:2-3 whom Paul describes as having “struggled beside me in the work of the Gospel.” Paul’s prominent mention of them and his urging for them to “be of the same mind in the Lord” suggests that they had some sort of leadership role in the church at Philippi. In 1 Cor. 1:11, Paul mentions “Chloe’s people” who have given him a report on the church in Corinth. This implies that Chloe is a woman of some significance and influence with both Paul and the Corinthian church. In Phlm. 2, Paul’s initial greetings include Philemon’s wife, whom Paul refers to as “Apphia, our sister.” (See the discussion below on the title “sister” as used in Paul’s letters.)
hard” in the church; Junia, who along with Andronicus, is acknowledged by Paul as a relative, fellow prisoner, and “pre-eminent among the apostles” and who preceded Paul in her faith in Christ; Tryphaena and Tryphosa who “work in the Lord”; and the “beloved Persis” who has “worked hard in the Lord”; along with Julia and Olympa. Paul here is referring to fellow missionaries and co-workers whose dedicated church ministry—what he acknowledges as “hard work”—is recognized, valued, and appreciated.14 His greetings to them are on the same level as his greetings to the men and equally heartfelt and appreciative. Hoping for support from Roman Christians on behalf of his plans for a Spanish mission, these greetings represent important social connections. Indeed, those whom Paul greets, both women as well as men, can be assumed to be church leaders of some consequence whose recommendation on his own behalf will garner acceptance of his letter and support for his future missionary endeavors.15

Among all the women named by Paul in the extended list in Romans 16, three in particular stand out for their distinctive leadership roles: Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2), Prisca (Rom. 16:3-4) and Junia (Rom. 16:7). Phoebe, the first-named, is likely the bearer of Paul’s letter to the Christians of Rome while she travels there on some business trip.16


15 Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women Partners," 73.

16 Recommendations such as the one here in Rom. 16:1-2 are well-attested in the literature of the period (cf. 2 Cor. 8:16-24; Phil. 2:25-30; Phlm. 8-20; Pol. Phil. 13.1). See James D. G. Dunn, Romans 9-16 (WBC 38B; Dallas: World Books, 1988), 886; Harry Y. Gamble, Jr., The Textual History of the Letter to
Paul refers to Phoebe as “our sister” (τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν), \textit{diakonos} (διάκονος), and \textit{prostatis} (“benefactor,” “patron”), titles that offer clues regarding Phoebe’s role in her local church at Cenchreae. While the title “sister” connotes that she is a church member, Paul’s description of Phoebe as “our sister” suggests not only esteem, respect, and even affection, but a universal brotherhood and sisterhood of all believers.\textsuperscript{18} Yet Paul also uses the title “brother” or “sister” in reference to his co-workers.\textsuperscript{19} Apphia, for example, greeted by Paul in Phlm. 1:2 as “our sister,” is included in a list of leaders connected with the local house church. Thus, Phoebe as “our sister” may also indicate that she is a co-worker of Paul’s. This would certainly fit with his designation of her as \textit{diakonos} of her local church and as a \textit{prostatis} “to many,” including to Paul himself.

At this point it is only fair to ask what did Paul himself mean by these two terms, \textit{diakonos} and \textit{prostatis}? It is noteworthy that Paul applies to Phoebe—clearly a woman—a grammatically masculine word, διάκονος (\textit{diakonos}), which has created not a few problems in the history of translation as interpreters have struggled to understand what

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{} Ben Witherington III, \textit{Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 382. According to Dunn (886), while the term “brother” (ἀδελφός) was commonly used among religious associations, it is unattested outside of Christian literature (1 Cor. 7:15; 9:5; Philm 2; James 2:15; Ign. Pol. 5.1; 2 Clem. 12.5; 19.1; 20.2; Herm. \textit{Vis.} 2.2.3; 2.3.1). However, the title “sister” is known among the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 4Q502, fragment 98, “sisters” (נוֹתָנָה) appears to parallel “brothers” in a way which suggests that women’s membership in the community is, in some way, on par with that of males. See Sidnie White Crawford, "Mothers, Sisters, and Elders: Titles for Women in Second Temple Jewish and Early Christian Communities," in \textit{The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity} (ed. James R. Davila; Boston: Brill, 2003), 182.

17 Or possibly “your sister” (τὴν ἀδελφὴν ὑμῶν), as in \textit{P}46, F, and G.

18 Gal. 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:1; 16:20; 2 Cor. 1:1; 2:13; 8:23; 9:3,5; Phil 2:25.
\end{thebibliography}
Paul actually meant. This fact is often overlooked by translators who render διάκονος of Rom. 16:1 as “deaconess” (NJB, RSV). This wrongly suggests, however, that Phoebe’s role as deacon was equivalent to that of the office of deaconess known from the third century on, but there is no evidence from the text itself that a woman deacon of the mid-first century had the same role as deaconesses of later centuries whose ministry was directed at other women. Other translations render διάκονος as “minister” (NAB), or “servant” (NIV), but these terms imply that a woman in one of Paul’s churches could not have served as a deacon. Yet Paul himself gives no hint either to what a deacon’s...
responsibilities were or that such responsibilities were differentiated by gender. Instead, thanks to Paul, Phoebe is the first recorded deacon in the history of Christianity. To be sure, while Paul often uses the word διάκονος in a general way to mean “minister” or “servant,” in Rom. 16:1 the use of the participle οὖσαν followed by διάκονος suggests an ongoing and permanent responsibility or role, an idea reinforced by linking this role to a specific location, i.e., the church of Cenchreae. Further, the pairing of ἐπίσκοποι (literally, “overseers” or “supervisors”) and διάκονοι (“deacons”) in Phil. 1:1 suggests that διάκονος, like ἐπίσκοπος, is a title for an office, in a way parallel to how these ministry of leadership in the church at Cenchreae.” See Sema’s essay, "Phoebe: Deacon or Deaconess?,” *Bible Translator* 60 (April 2009): 109.

22 As Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza rightly objects, “Exegetes tend to denigrate [Phoebe’s] titles, or to interpret them differently, because they are given to a woman.” Schüssler Fiorenza further remarks that Phoebe’s “office in the church of Cenchreae is not limited by prescribed gender roles. She is not a deaconess of the whole church,” nonetheless, she is right to point out that there is no evidence that Phoebe’s role as διακόνος was limited by gender. As Aheto Sema cautions, when translating διακόνος in regard to the woman Phoebe, one must be careful not to make distinctions which the text itself does not make (“Phoebe: Deacon or Deaconess?,” 108). For a helpful discussion based on what is known from ancient inscriptions regarding women office holders in first century Asia Minor, see R.A. Kearsley, "Women in Public Life in the Roman East: Junita Theodora, Claudia Metrodora and Phoebe, Benefactress of Paul," *Tyndale Bulletin* 50 (1999): 189-211. One of these women, Claudia Metrodora, was honored with numerous inscriptions for her extensive civic involvement both in her native Chios and Ephesus (not far from Chios).


24 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15, 23: Gal. 2:17. In 1 Cor. 3:5 and 2 Cor. 6:4, Paul refers to himself and his co-workers in this very general sense of διάκονος as “co-workers.” Imitating Paul’s self-description as a “servant of God” (2 Cor. 6:4), Ephesians 3:7 uses διάκονος in the same way.


same titles are used to designate office holders in Greco-Roman non-Christian voluntary associations, both Jewish and pagan, of the same period. Indeed, when we look at ancient inscriptions, we see that a masculine term applied to a woman connotes an office of some sort, as in the case of women who served as civic magistrates or synagogue leaders. Women are also known to have served as elders in some communities in the Mediterranean world, such as the women elders of the gerousia of Phrygian Sebaste, or of the community represented by 4Q502, a scroll found at Qumran.

stage in the church’s organizational development (185).


It is worthy of note that the majority of these inscriptions were originally from different areas of Asia Minor, including places near Ephesus. In fact, Riet Van Bremen (57) asserts that, unlike mainland Greece, by the first century CE women are more frequently attested in civic offices throughout Asia Minor—some forty cities in all—than in any previous era. Ephesus itself, by the end of the first century CE, opened up the civic office of prytanis to women of means and affluence who could afford the expenses that came with its honorary responsibilities. See Sviatoslav Dmitriev, City Government in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 280, 317.

29 Regarding the women elders of Phrygian Sebaste, see Van Bremen, The Limits of Participation, 56, n. 60. Van Bremen’s research shows that women were not office holders for roles thought to require public participation. While in some cities they may have participated in civic office, offices exercised in
All this is to say that women in the Hellenistic Roman period were known to have served in religious and civic offices, probably not in the same numbers as the men, but nonetheless, the historical record indicates that women office holders did in fact exist. Thus, the presumption that the title diakonos was limited in respect to Phoebe is not supported by what we now know of women’s roles of leadership in the Hellenistic Roman period from the archaeological record and papyri. There is no compelling reason, then, to believe that the title diakonos, as Paul applies it to “our sister” Phoebe, is any different from the sort of church office implied by Phil. 1:1—whatever that may be at this early stage. As C. H. Dodd remarks, “whatever the ‘deacons’ were at Philippi, that Phoebe was at Cenchrea.”

To put it another way, Phoebe was undoubtedly a recognized leader in the early Church and it is no less than Paul himself who recognizes her as such, without any condescension, and without qualifying or minimizing her role. On the contrary, Paul further describes her as a prostatis, “patron,” or “benefactor,” one whose patronage has benefitted “many,” including Paul himself. Scholarship in the last twenty five years has

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30 C. H. Dodd, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1932), 235. E. Käsemann maintains that with Paul’s designation of Phoebe as diakonos, “one may at least see an early stage of what later became the ecclesiastical office” (*Romans*, 411). Finding parallels in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (*Philadelphians* 10.1 and *Smyrn. 10.1*, Osiek and MacDonald suggest “that the context of Rom. 16:1-2 hints that representation of one church to another has something to do with [the role of diakonos], since representation or agency is one of the principal connotations of the diakonia word group” (215). For Osiek and MacDonald, “Phoebe functions this way with regard to Paul” (215). See also the BDAG where one of the definitions of diakonia is “service rendered in an intermediary capacity, mediation, assignment” (230).

31 Prostatis is the feminine form of prostatēs, a word which Plutarch equates with the Latin patronus, or “patron” (*Romulus 13*, cited in Osiek and MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place*, 196). The BDG
generally taken this statement of Paul as suggesting that Phoebe’s patronage benefited the house church of Cenchreae in a substantial way; she likely was leader and hostess of the house church there.32 Although it is assumed that as a prostatēs Phoebe would have been

(second edition, 1979) translates prostatēs in Rom. 16:2 as “she has been of great assistance to many.” While the BDAG (third edition, 2000) goes further, defining prostatēs as “benefactor” or “patron,” it nonetheless warns that “the relationship suggested by the term προστάτης is not to be confused with the Roman patron-client system, which was of a different order and alien to Greek tradition.” Beginning with the Vulgate’s “adstitit” (“she assists,” see note 20 above), various translators have translated the noun prostatēs verbally as “come to the help” (NJB), “has been a great help” (NIV, 1984 edition), or “has been a helper” (RSV). The NEB translates prostatēs as “a good friend.” As Dunn remarks, “the unwillingness of commentators to give prostatēs its most natural and obvious sense of “patron” is most striking” (Romans 9-16, 888).

Recent research, however, challenges this minimization of Phoebe’s role by both translators and compilers of lexical definitions. In contradiction to both the BDG and its updated replacement, the BDAG, an essay by E. A. Judge (“Cultural Conformity and Innovation in Paul: Some Clues from Contemporary Documents,” Tyndale Bulletin 36 [1984]: 3-24) makes two helpful points: 1) in his review of evidence from papyri and inscriptions, Judge establishes that the Roman patron-client system was indeed in place in the Greek East during the Roman period; 2) pointing out that the word prostatēs is “used particularly of a sponsor of a private association” (20), Judge was the first to discuss examples from unpublished ancient papyri regarding women sponsors and patrons (20-22). See also Chapter Nine, “Women Patrons in the Life of House Churches,” in Osiek and MacDonald, 194-219. Osiek and MacDonald offer a helpful discussion of Roman women named in Latin inscriptions as “patronissa” or “patrona” who functioned in ways analogous to contemporary male patrons (202-203). Corinth, of course, was a Roman colony while nearby Cenchreae served as its eastern seaport. There is no reason to believe that the patronage of Phoebe of Cenchreae would have functioned any differently from that of known Roman women of her time. See also the discussion on the evidence from papyrology and archaeology in Dunn, Romans 9-16 (88); Jewett, Romans (946-947); Witherington, Paul’s Letter to the Romans (383-384); and Kearsley, "Women in Public Life in the Roman East," 189-211. As Osiek and MacDonald insist, the “evidence makes clear that both personal and public patronage were widely practiced by women in much the same way that it was practiced by men. The older interpretation that public offices and titles when held by men were actual, but when held by women were honorary, is no longer tenable. The burden of proof is on those who would so contend. Indeed, many of the titles and offices in cities, temples, and synagogues were in fact honorary, but equally so for both men and women.” According to Osiek and MacDonald, the main difference between men and women patrons was that women were excluded from voting and elected office, although in Asia Minor women could hold some of the highest public municipal appointments (209).

32 Jewett, Romans; Witherington, Paul’s Letter to the Romans; Dunn, Romans 9-16; Osiek and MacDonald, A Woman’s Place. According to Osiek and MacDonald, Christian house churches functioned in the same way as any other patronage situation where women patrons hosted and supplied the needs of the gatherings of voluntary associations (214). That women served in this capacity in primitive Christianity is readily apparent in the New Testament itself: Mary, the mother of John Mark in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15 40), Nympha (Col. 4:15); Prisca and Aquila (Rom. 16:4; 1 Cor. 16:19). Among the definitions for prostatēs is that of “presider” or “president” (LSJM, 1526), which is not the context of Rom. 16:2. Nonetheless, Osiek and MacDonald caution that the idea of Phoebe as “presider” in a local liturgical assembly should not be entirely ruled out given the “prestige and authority” that would have come from her role as benefactor, patron, and hostess to her local church (215-216).
a wealthy woman of the upper class, recent research by Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald has demonstrated that even non-elite women with only a modest amount of wealth could function as patrons in patron-client relationships. In fact, these relationships could cross the lines, not only of social class, but of gender as well. Osiek and MacDonald explain that,

in the Roman social system, as distinct from the older Greek ways, status took precedence over gender as a marker of prestige and power. A person of higher social status and access to power could function as mediator and dispenser of favor regardless of sex, with the same expectations of reciprocity in terms of honor, praise, and loyalty on the part of clients.

Also noteworthy is the fact that in the early imperial period, not only were women able to function as patrons but they could also exercise their benefactions autonomously, that is to say, independently from their husbands, as in the case of Metrodora, the mid-first century woman honored for her benefactions and civic participation in both her native Chios and in Ephesus. In the inscriptions from Chios, Metrodora is honored without any mention of a husband; we only know that she had one because of the inscriptions in Ephesus which include him. In other words, while it is generally presumed that Phoebe, addressed by Paul without a husband and traveling to Rome without a husband (so it would appear), was a widow, she may not have been. To put it another way, the

33 So Judge, 21; Dunn, 889; Jewett, 948.
34 Osiek and MacDonald, 201-203.
35 Ibid., 209.
37 Whelan, Amici Pauli, 73-74.
woman whom we see in Paul’s warm recommendation is autonomous, acting independently of her husband. Again, in his mention of Phoebe, there is not even the slightest hint that Paul considers her in any way different, subordinate, lesser, or inferior because of her gender. Gender here is simply not an issue. On the contrary, as E. A. Judge has observed, by his recommendation of Phoebe, Paul is acknowledging his “social dependence” on a woman who is his patroness. In the patron-client culture of that time which crossed the boundaries of gender and social status, Paul, then, as Phoebe’s “client,” was in a subordinate role to his patroness and “financial agent.” Phoebe, however, is dependent upon Paul’s recommendation and his connections with his contacts from Ephesus (i.e., Prisca and Aquila) now residing in Rome, as he asks that they welcome her and perhaps even show her hospitality. The subordination, then, is a mutual one where both serve as patron and client to the other.

Of particular interest are Paul’s greetings to two husband and wife teams, Prisca and Aquila (Rom. 16:3-5), and Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7). In Romans 16:3,

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38 See the discussion by Osiek and MacDonald on married women in patronage roles to Christian groups independently of their husbands (215).

39 Judge, 21.

40 Whelan, 83; Jewett, 947; Witherington, 384; Luke Timothy Johnson (Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary [Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2001], 233) explains that, “Given the fact that Paul has consistently designated his collection as a diakonia . . . and that prostatis can bear the meaning financial patron . . . we are justified in our evaluation of Phoebe as something like Paul’s ‘financial agent’ in his negotiations with the Roman church.”

41 As Caroline Whelan (“Amica Pauli,” 84) explains, “Benefaction included not just financial support, but also allowing clients access to one's social and economic resources. Paul, as a 'client' of Phoebe would share her honour, and she, as someone recommended or 'sponsored' by Paul would enjoy Paul's prestige in his domain of influence.”

42 See also Acts 18:18,26. Prisca (or Priscilla, as she is affectionately known in Acts) and Aquila are also mentioned in Acts 18:2,18,26 and 2 Tim. 4:19. There is no evidence, however, that the author of
Prisca is mentioned ahead of her husband. This suggests that she had higher status than he, since the usual practice at the time would have been to mention a husband’s name first, not a wife’s. Both together as a husband and wife team are described by Paul as his “co-workers,” fellow missionaries who risked their own safety for Paul. Paul also implies that these two were known to “all the churches of the Gentiles,” suggesting that they were close collaborators with Paul involved in all his many Gentile mission churches. By the time Romans is written, these two leaders are in Rome and host a house church there (Rom. 16:3-5).

The second husband and wife team, Andronicus and Junia, Paul describes as his “relatives and fellow prisoners” who knew Christ before he did (Rom. 16:7). In fact, Paul states that they are ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, “prominent among the apostles.” Whatever the term “apostle” meant for Paul’s day (and there is a great deal of discussion about this), it is significant that Paul applies it to a woman, Junia. In fact, along with

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Ephesians would have known either Acts or 2 Timothy; thus any references to Prisca and Aquila outside of Paul’s genuine correspondence are not helpful to our review of what the author of Ephesians gleaned from Paul’s letters regarding his attitudes toward women. We will therefore limit our discussion of Prisca and Aquila to only what is known from Romans and 1 Corinthians. For a more detailed discussion of Prisca and Aquila as gleaned from Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Timothy, see Marie Noël Keller, *Priscilla and Aquila: Paul’s Coworkers in Christ Jesus* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2010).

43 Jewett, *Romans*, 955-957; MacDonald, "Reading Real Women," 204. However, this is in contrast with 1 Cor. 16:19 where Aquila is listed first among the greeters to the church in Corinth.

44 If it is true that 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus, as is generally believed, then Prisca and Aquila also hosted a house church there during Paul’s extended stay in that city (1 Cor. 16:19; Acts 18:19ff). In Acts 18:2, Paul first meets them for the first time in Corinth, after they had been expelled from Rome under Claudius. In Acts 18:19, they accompany Paul as far as Ephesus, where they stay and where Paul will later meet up with them. Here in Rom. 16:3-4, they are back in Rome, doing what they have done all along, promoting the growth of nascent Christian communities.

45 The term “apostle” is a bit complicated. Paul will sometimes use it in the sense of someone who has seen the Risen Christ. In that sense, he justifies using the title “apostle” for himself (1 Cor. 15:8). Some scholars, such as Jewett, believe that Paul’s statement in Rom. 16:7 implies that Andronicus and Junia were
her husband, no less than Paul himself acclaims her as “prominent among the apostles.”

There is nothing in the way that Paul writes about Junia to lead us to think that she, by virtue of her feminine gender, is something less than her husband. Indeed, the apostolic testimony and ministry of men and women such as Andronicus and Junia, a Christian married couple who knew Christ before Paul did, would form, along with Paul and other

included in the group of five hundred to whom the Risen Christ appeared (1 Cor. 15:6). That would make Andronicus and Junia eye witnesses to the Risen Christ and thus “apostles.” However, this does not adequately take into consideration the very next verse, 1 Cor. 15:7, and Christ’s appearance to “all the apostles.” Moreover, 2 Cor. 8:23 suggests that an “apostle” was an envoy or messenger of a local church, even commissioned by that church as an itinerant missionary or preacher. Andronicus and Junia, however, are not connected with any local church in particular, which, according to Jewett, gives further impetus to the idea that “apostle” in their regard means “eye witness” to the Risen Christ. See the discussion on the apostleship of Andronicus and Junia in Jewett, Romans, 963-964. While a full review of this rather complicated term is beyond the scope of the discussion here, in any case, suffice it to say that the word “apostle,” originally a secular term, becomes appropriated by Christians as a title of leadership with some real investment of authority. See Hans Dieter Betz, “Apostle,” ABD 1:309-311.

46 That Paul acclaims a woman as “prominent among the apostles” along with her husband has become problematic for translators and interpreters only since the Middle Ages. The problem lies with the ambiguity regarding the gender of the name in the unaccented Greek text. In the Greek of Paul’s time, it would have been written without accents (Ἰουνίαν). In the patristic period, it is presumed that Paul is referring to a husband and wife team; thus Ἰουνίαν becomes accented as a feminine singular accusative: Ἰουνίαν (“Junia”). Beginning in the ninth century, however, some manuscripts appear in which it is presumed that Ἰουνίαν is not a feminine singular accusative but a masculine singular accusative and thus accented accordingly: Ἰούνιαν (“Junias”). Nonetheless, while the female Latin name “Junia” occurs more than two hundred fifty times in Greek and Latin inscriptions in Rome alone, the male name “Junias” is unattested anywhere, although the BDF (125.2) claims that “Junias” is a shortened form of the Latin name Junianus, Junianius, or Junilius. Some early manuscripts such as P 6, 606, 1718, 2685, and some early translations (Vg, Bohairic, Ethiopic) have Ιουλιαν (“Julia”) instead of Ἰούνιαν, an unambiguous indication that Rom. 16:7 was read in the early Church as referring to a woman apostle. With the appearance of the second edition of the Nestle critical New Testament text and its use of the masculine-accented Ἰούνιαν, including the Nestle-Aland, the male name “Junias” is used by the RSV, ASV, ERV, NEB, NIV, NJB, among others, and many modern commentators. Regarding attempts from the medieval period on to read Rom. 16:7 as referring to two males instead of a husband and wife team, James D. G. Dunn observes “the assumption that [the name] must be male is a striking indictment of male presumption regarding the character and structure of earliest Christianity” (Romans 9-16, 894). Since 1981 and the publication of the Nestle-Aland which uses the feminine-accented form Ἰούνιαν, more recent translations, such as the NRSV, NAB, and REB, now use the feminine name “Junia.” See Dunn, 894; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Romans (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 737-740; Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 2002), 475-476. For a history of the problematic interpretation of Rom. 16:7, see Eldon J. Epp, Junia: The First Woman Apostle (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).
apostles and prophets, the “foundation” of the Church (Eph. 2:20). By implication, this means that at this early time in Church history, before the widespread reception of Luke-Acts and its linking of “the Twelve” in Jesus’ inner circle with the expression “the Twelve Apostles,” Junia, as well as her husband Andronicus, would be respected as having apostolic authority on some level.

The way in which Paul writes about his women co-workers in Romans 16 is consistent with those women whom he mentions by name elsewhere: Apphia (Phlm. 2), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3); and Chloe (1:11). He gently urges a resolution to the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche without insisting on any subordination to male leadership. On the contrary, they are co-workers of Paul whom he describes as having “labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.” Paul writes about them in such a way as to give the impression that they are on the same level as their male colleagues.

Indeed, a careful reading of Paul’s genuine letters leads to the inescapable conclusion that he values women leaders in his churches. According to Wendy Cotter, “When Paul

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47 There is no indication in Ephesians that the idea of “apostle” is linked exclusively with “the Twelve” of Jesus’ inner circle any more than it is in Paul’s letters, particularly since Paul himself is referred to as an apostle in Eph. 1:1, following, of course, his genuine letters. In fact, the expression “the Twelve Apostles” may not be a fixed term yet at the time that Ephesians is written. For a helpful essay describing the distinction between “the Twelve” and the idea of “apostle” in first century Christianity, see John P. Meier, "The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus' Public Ministry?," JBL 116 (Winter 1997): 635-672.

48 Richard Bauckham proposes a number of fascinating arguments that Junia is none other than Joanna, a disciple of Jesus named in both Luke 8:3 and Luke 24:10 (where she is a witness to the empty tomb). See Bauckham’s Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 109-202.

49 As Wendy Cotter has observed, “the respect Paul exhibits toward each woman’s position, and the level of concern he shows in making a public appeal to them, suggests that both Euodia and Syntyche hold some office of distinction in the Philippian community.” See Cotter’s essay, “Women's Authority Roles in Paul's Church: Countercultural or Conventional?,” Novum Testamentum 36, 04 (1994), 353.
recognizes special members of the churches with the epithets of ‘co-worker,’ ‘deacon’ and ‘patron/benefactor/protector,’ women are on an equal footing with men.

Furthermore, Paul never situates any of these women in their relation to a man, their father, brother, husband or son. Indeed, Paul even benefits from and encourages women’s leadership. Nothing that he says about them in any way diminishes their role vis à vis men in the churches he started. On the contrary, he describes women as his “sisters,” his co-workers and fellow apostles, even church office holders whose ministerial gifts and leadership are of tremendous benefit to the nascent church.

Moreover, from 1 Cor. 11:5, we know that in the churches that Paul founded, women have a role as prophets. And while Paul’s instructions to the women prophets in 1 Cor. 11:5 have to do with proper and modest dress, he places no limits on their speech.

Thus, when we look at what Paul has to say about women leaders in his churches, we find nothing which coheres with the strong insistence on a woman’s subordination in 1 Cor. 14:34-35. But what does Paul have to say about women and marriage? In his teaching on marriage, does he view women as subordinate partners in any way?

**Paul’s Teaching on Marriage**

Paul’s teaching on marriage is found in 1 Corinthians, written in response to a letter from the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 7:1a). It is noteworthy that he immediately

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50 Cotter, 354.

51 MacDonald, ”Reading Real Women,” 207; Cotter, 354.

52 See the discussion on 1 Cor. 11:3-16 below.

53 Paul’s teaching on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 is also written within the context of his belief that the final eschaton was imminent (1 Cor. 7:29-31). Paul’s eschatological perspectives, however, are
precedes his discussion on marriage with strong denunciations of *porneia*, i.e., sexual relations outside of marriage, and that these denunciations are directed at the men of the congregation (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 6:9-20). Paul begins his instructions on marriage in response to the Corinthians’ statement which he cites in 1 Cor. 7:1b, “it is good for a man not to touch a woman.” This statement has parallels among Stoic and Cynic discussions beyond the scope of the discussion here. Instead, our focus will be on how Paul views the roles and responsibilities of men and women in regard to marriage and the single life and, in particular, if his teachings can be construed in any way as to support the traditional Greco-Roman notion that women (and wives) were to be subordinate to men.

In 1 Cor. 5:1-13 and 6:9-20, Paul condemns not only an adulterous (and incestuous) affair (5:1), an arrangement that, at any rate, would have been illegal, but he also strongly condemns the sort of sexual behavior that was within legal and culturally acceptable limits. This is in strong contrast to accepted norms of Paul’s time whereby exclusive sexual fidelity in marriage was expected of wives but not husbands. In fact, a man’s sexual encounters with slaves or prostitutes, whether males or females, or with boys from the lower classes, were so culturally acceptable as to be quite common. For a discussion of the norms for acceptable male sexual behavior in late Republican and early imperial Rome, see Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World* (trans. Cormac O Cuilleanáin; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 120-164; Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Williams states that “provided they maintained at least the appearance of moderation, Roman men felt free to indulge in occasional visits to prostitutes, and it seems always to have been assumed that the services of prostitutes of both sexes would be in demand”(39). In regard to slaves, Williams observes that “neither the law nor society in general took exception to Roman men's sexual use of their own slaves,” whether male or female (38). Regarding the widespread practice of pederasty, see Williams’ discussion in 72-77. By way of contrast to the sexual norms of the time, Paul’s sexual ethics, as seen here in 1 Cor. 5-7, limit sexual relations to marriage alone—without any exception.

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55 W. E. Phipps ("Is Paul's Attitude toward Sexual Relations Contained in 1 Cor 7.1?," *New Testament Studies* 28 [1982]: 125-131) has observed that from at least Tertullian on, interpreters have taken 1 Cor. 7:1b as a statement from Paul himself (125-126). Beginning with David Smith (*The Life and Letters of St. Paul* [New York: Harper & Row, 1920], 262), however, a growing number of scholars has expressed uncertainty regarding Paul as the source of 1 Cor. 7:1b, proposing instead that he is citing a statement written by the Corinthians in their letter to him and responding to it. Phipps further observes that in regard to these scholars, there is a division between those who believe that Paul agrees with the Corinthians’ statement and those who believe that Paul disagrees with their statement.

The view here is that 1 Cor. 7:1b is indeed a statement which Paul quotes from the Corinthians, but not one with which he is in full agreement. As O. Larry Yarbrough points out, Paul responds to the Corinthians here in 1 Cor. 7:1 in the same way he does in 1 Cor. 6:12, 8:1, and 10:23, all of which are commonly regarded as citations from the Corinthians’ earlier letter to Paul and not originating with Paul himself. In each case, Paul quotes from the Corinthians in such a way as to appear to agree with them, but then he goes on to add strong qualifications to the statements made by them which he is quoting. See O. Larry Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS 80; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 93. Moreover, as Phipps notes, “to presume that Paul's attitude toward sexual relations is not stated in 1 Cor. 7.1b fits much better the context of 1 Cor. 6-7” (128). This is because Paul’s teaching on
of the time regarding the legitimacy and necessity of marriage for the truly wise man (the traditional Stoic view) versus the superiority of having the leisure time (σχολή) for a man to dedicate himself to philosophical contemplation (the Cynic view). Because the word ἄνθρωπος is used and not ἄνήρ, this statement can be interpreted in three different ways, depending on the context in which it is read. One way would be to interpret it within the context of marriage (a man renouncing sexual relations with his wife), a second within the context of widowhood or divorce and whether or not a man should remarry, and a third within the context of men who have never been married and who have never had sexual relations. Paul offers a thorough response to the Corinthians’ statement by considering it in all three of its possible contexts. What is striking in Paul’s answer is how he reshapes the context of an essentially androcentric statement into a discussion which takes into consideration the needs and responsibilities, both sexual and spiritual, of women as well as men. In fact, throughout 1 Cor. 7, what Paul says about sex marriage in 1 Cor. 7 allows for mutual conjugal relations and thus directly opposes the statement about sexual abstention in 1 Cor. 7:1b without some qualification. In other words, Paul’s approach in responding to the Corinthians is to look for a place of common agreement—yes, sometimes it is good for a man not to touch a woman—but then he goes on to offer a carefully-stated and nuanced explanation wherein he expresses his own more developed views which are not entirely compatible with the full implications of the Corinthians’ original statement.

56 See Will Deming’s discussion on contemporary Stoic and Cynic debates on marriage as the background to 1 Corinthians 7, Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). Deming offers a convincing argument that 1 Cor. 7:1b represents a Cynic approach to the debate where the goal is not sexual asceticism, per se, but the pursuit of σχολή as the supreme value. Deming also demonstrates how eclectic those with Stoic leanings were at the time, so that philosophers such as Epictetus, generally considered among the Roman Stoa, would also have some very Cynic views in regard to marriage, as we see in Epictetus’ statement on the freedom that he enjoys to pursue the σχολή of philosophy without the responsibilities of marriage and family to distract him (Diss. 3.22.45-48,69-72).

57 The word ἄνήρ, which means not only “man” but also “husband,” would imply the context of marriage. In regard to the problematic translations of this verse as if the Greek word here were ἄνήρ, see the cautions offered by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians (AB 32; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 278.
and marriage he applies equally to women as well as to men.

Paul’s first response to the Corinthians’ statement in 1 Cor. 7:1b is to address it within the context of marriage, the likely context for the majority of his Corinthian audience. In 1 Cor. 7:2 he begins with a traditional Jewish idea that a young man should marry in order to avoid sexual immorality. Paul, however, applies that idea to include women as well. In contrast to the androcentrism of the Corinthians’ statement, Paul then proceeds to insist first on a husband’s obligation to consider his wife’s conjugal needs and then on a wife’s reciprocal obligation to her husband (1 Cor. 7:3). While he concedes the traditional view that a wife does not have authority (οὐκ ἔξουσιάζει) over her own body—it is her husband who has authority over her body—in the same way, Paul adds, a husband has no authority over his own body: it is his wife who has authority over his body. Thus, Paul insists that authority and reciprocity between husband and wife are mutual. In fact, Paul counsels against “robbing one another” (μὴ ἀποστερεῖτε ἀλλήλους) except by mutual agreement and only for a time in order for both to devote themselves to prayer (ἵνα σχολάσητε τῇ προσευχῇ). The way Paul states this is worthy of note. He uses the verb σχολάσητε, from σχολάζω, to have leisure, spare time, or opportunity. The root of this verb is σχολή, the leisure time for the purpose of study, philosophical contemplation, and self-development. Although in Stoic-Cynic discussions sexual abstinence is viewed as a means for men to have σχολή, Paul views sexual

58 Tob. 4:12; T. Levi 9:9-10.

59 While marital reciprocity and the mutual sharing of bodies was commonly held in the philosophical literature of the time as the ideal, Paul appears to be unusual in his teaching that wives, too, have authority over their husband’s body (1 Cor. 7:4). See Deming’s careful review of contemporaneous literature in regard to household management (Paul on Marriage and Celibacy, Chapter 2: “The Stoic-Cynic Marriage Debate,” 47-97).
abstinence as a freedom which both a husband and a wife may mutually agree to give each other for a period of time. In this way, Paul gently re-frames in a more gender-inclusive way what in the dominant culture tends to be an androcentric discussion about what men need in regard either to marriage or sexual abstinence. Paul’s answer is to offer a discussion which includes an equal consideration of women and their needs, not only what they owe their husbands but what their husbands owe them, i.e., their conjugal rights as wives as well as mutually agreed upon σχολή or leisure time in order to devote themselves, like their husbands, to spiritual pursuits.

Paul then addresses the second possible context of 7:1b, that is, whether men who have lost a wife, whether through death or divorce, should remarry. Again, Paul’s response in vv. 8-16 includes women (χήραι, “widows”) as well as men.60 Although he encourages the widowed, both men and women, to remain unmarried as he is, he nonetheless permits remarriage “since it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion” (7:8-9).61 He does not at all, however, condone divorce for any reason other than

60 Paul uses the word ἄγαμος (nom. sing., ἄγαμος) in 1 Cor. 7:8, which is literally translated as “unmarried.” Gordon Fee (First Epistle to the Corinthians [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 287-288) offers a number of objections to the acceptance of the more traditional reading of “all categories of unmarried” into ἄγαμος. First of all, Paul has already advised the unmarried to get married in 7:2. If ἄγαμος here did not refer to widows, then the teaching in 7:8, as well as in 7:25-38, would be a superfluous repetition of the teaching in 7:2. Secondly, according to Fee, the Greek word for “widower” was never used in the koine period. The word ἄγαμος was used instead. (Fee cites the LSI, but see the LSJM entry for ἄγαμος, 5.) Third, reading ἄγαμος as “widowers” fits the pattern seen throughout the passage where Paul deals with men and women equally: because Paul refers to χήραις, “widows,” along with ἄγαμος, it makes sense to read ἄγαμος as the male counterpart to χήραις, i.e., “widowers.” After all, Fee notes, if ἄγαμος refers to all the unmarried, then what is the reason for adding χήραις, “widows”? Finally, the use of ἄγαμος in 7:11,34 indicates that it “denotes not the ‘unmarried’ in general, but the ‘demarried,’ those formerly but not now married” (288). For these reasons, within the context of 1 Cor. 7:8,11,34, we will read ἄγαμος as referring not just to someone who is unmarried but, more specifically, to someone who was once married and is no longer, i.e., someone widowed or divorced.

61 This is in sharp contrast to the deprecatory discussion of the overpowering sexual feelings of young widows in 1 Tim. 5:11-15 and the insistence in 1 Tim. 5:14 that they should “marry, bear children,
to give an unbelieving spouse the freedom to find someone more compatible (7:10-15). In fact, Paul is clear that his prohibition of divorce comes, not from himself, but from Jesus (οὐκ ἐγὼ ἀλλὰ ὁ κύριος). This prohibition has two parts to it, the first against a wife’s “being separated” (μὴ χωρισθῆναι) from her husband62 (7:10) and the second against a husband divorcing his wife (7:11). If a wife is separated, Paul writes, she must remain single or else reconcile with her husband. Even so, Paul insists that a husband may not divorce his wife. Further, a believing spouse, whether man or woman, may not divorce an unbelieving spouse who consents to remain in the marriage (7:12-13).63 This is because the unbelieving spouse is “consecrated” through the believing spouse (1 Cor. 7:14). In fact, both a believing wife and a believing husband are able to “save” their unbelieving partner as well as the children born from their union (1 Cor. 7:15).

In 1 Cor. 7:25, Paul addresses the third possible context of the Corinthians’ question in 1 Cor. 7:1, namely the unmarried who have never had any sexual experience (παρθένοι). Ordinarily παρθένος refers to a pre-teen girl or young woman of marriageable age “without the experience of a man,”64 but here, however, it refers to both men (1 Cor. 7:26-27,32) as well as women (1 Cor. 7:34, 36-38) without sexual

62 The verb used here, χωρισθῆναι, is an aorist passive infinitive which, as Fitzmyer points out, should not be translated intransitively, i.e., “should not separate,” as it is in the RSV, NRSV, ESV, and NAB. Grammatically, it is not really a parallel to the active infinitive ἀφίέναι of the following verse. Fitzmyer believes that the passive sense here fits better the original Palestinian Jewish context of Jesus in which women were not permitted to initiate divorce but rather could be the passive recipients of divorce by their husbands. See Fitzmyer’s discussion in First Corinthians, 288-295.

63 Unlike 1 Cor. 7:10 which reflects a more traditional Jewish context (and likely the Palestinian Jewish context of Jesus, see note 74), 1 Cor. 7:13 reflects the Greco-Roman custom in which a wife may herself legally initiate a divorce.

64 Menander, Sicyonius 372-73.
experience who have never been married.65 While, with the eschaton in view (1 Cor. 7:29,31), Paul encourages the unmarried to remain single so as to be spared “the troubles of life” (1 Cor. 7:28, θλῖψιν δὲ τῇ σαρκὶ ἔξουσιν, literally, “they will have afflictions of the flesh”) and “to be free from anxieties” (1 Cor. 7:32), he also asserts that to marry is no sin (1 Cor. 7:28). In 1 Cor. 7:32-34, he discusses the benefits of being unmarried versus the responsibilities of marriage. The unmarried man is “anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:32), while the unmarried woman, whether widowed66 or never married (ἡ γυνὴ ἡ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος), is also “anxious about the affairs of the Lord” but “so that she might be holy in body and spirit”(1 Cor. 7:34).67 Paul in this way defends the deliberate choice that a believing woman might have for a celibate lifestyle for the sake of σχολή, an option that was culturally permissible for male philosophers but not usually for women.68 In fact, in 1 Cor. 7:39-40, he concludes his

65 See Fitzmyer’s discussion on παρθένοι, First Corinthians, 313-14. Rev. 14:4 also uses the word παρθένοι to mean unmarried men who never had sexual relations.

66 The term “unmarried” here may also include women not in the category of widows and virgins, e.g., women separated from their husbands (1 Cor. 7:10-11) or abandoned by non-believing husbands (1 Cor. 7:12-16). See Margaret Y. MacDonald, “Virgins, Widows, and Wives: The Women of 1 Corinthians 7,” in A Feminist Companion to Paul (ed. Amy Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff; Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2004), 150.

67 Again, just as we saw in note 62 above, the view that Paul has of women in 1 Cor. 7 is markedly different from the view of women in the Pastoral Epistles. In 1 Timothy, for example, a woman is “saved through childbearing” (1 Tim. 2:15).

68 Epictetus, for example, describes the ideal Cynic as a man who remains unmarried so as to be “free from distraction and wholly devoted to the service of God” (Discourses, 3.22.69, cf. 3.22.69-72; W. A. Oldfather, LCL). Women sexual ascetics, however, are most unusual at this time and almost nothing is found in contemporary literature that would encourage female celibacy. An exception are the therapeutrides of Philo of Alexandria’s “De vita contemplativa,” a description of a Jewish monastic community in Alexandria comprised of both male (therapeutae) and female (therapeutrides) members, all celibate. Philo says that the majority of the women members were “elderly virgins” (γηραιαὶ παρθένοι) who lived a celibate monastic lifestyle for the sake of “a zeal and yearning for wisdom” (διὰ ζῆλον καὶ πόθον σοφίας) (Contempl. 68). For a discussion of these women, see Joan E. Taylor, Jewish Women Philosophers
lengthy response to the statement about male asceticism in 7:1b with strong encouragement for widows to remain single because, in his view as someone “with the Spirit of God,” they will be happier.\(^{69}\)

Although there are some clues that Paul’s remarks are directly intended for the Corinthian men who wrote to him (1 Cor. 7:27-32,36-38), the equal treatment and the respectful consideration that he gives to women in this discussion on marriage and sexual asceticism are remarkable. Nowhere in his extended discussion on Christian marriage in 1 Cor. 7 is there any mention of women’s subordination or inferior status. Instead, Paul writes very explicitly with the expectation that consideration and authority in a Christian partnership are to be entirely mutual: a husband owes his wife her due, just as she owes him; a husband has authority over his wife’s body, yes, but she, too, has authority over her husband’s body. Moreover, Paul tells his Corinthian correspondents that not only will a man have need of σχολή, but his wife will too, and through mutual agreement they are to respect each other’s need and desire for time apart for prayer. Finally, while ultimately Paul defends and even encourages the desire of unmarried men in the Corinthian church to remain single for the sake of holy leisure, he also goes well beyond the statement in 1 Cor. 7:1b to defend and encourage this same desire in women believers as well.

Certainly, in his teaching on marriage in 1 Cor. 7, Paul speaks about the relationship between husband and wife in a manner that presumes that it is a mutual and horizontal adult partnership. Again, just as in our review of Paul’s own relationships with his

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\(^{69}\) See note 62 above.
women co-workers, we find nothing in his extended teaching on marriage that coheres with 1 Cor. 14:34-35.

**Paul’s Other Statements on Gender Relations**

There are still two other important statements found in Paul’s genuine letters which deal with gender relations and which must be discussed in so far as these have implications for the husband-wife relationship. The first is Paul’s statement on headship in 1 Cor. 11:3: “the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man and the head of Christ is God.” The second is Paul’s statement in Gal. 3:28 that “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” On the surface, at least, these two statements would seem to be in opposition to each other with the latter seemingly implying the elimination of social rankings among the baptized while the former appears to hold up traditional vertical relationships. While Paul does not use the word ὑποτάσσω, 1 Cor. 11:3 suggests a vertical relationship of subordination to one’s particular head: the woman to the man, the man to Christ, Christ to God. Galatians 3:28, on the other hand, appears to be a statement about the unity shared in Christ between unequal pairings in the outside culture, whether Hellenistic Roman or Hellenistic Jewish. Both of these statements, however, must be read in their broader context in order to understand them.

The larger context for the statement on a man’s headship of a woman in 1 Cor. 11:3 has to do with appropriate dress and hairstyle for both men and women during worship (1 Cor. 11:4-6). Paul counsels men to keep their heads uncovered and hair short (1 Cor. 11:4,14) while women are to keep their heads covered and hair long (1 Cor.
11:5,15). He offers various reasons for this, the first is because any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered “dishonors his head” (1 Cor. 11:4), a reference both to his own head and, metaphorically, to Christ as the “head of the man” (1 Cor. 11:3). In the same way, a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered “dishonors her head” (1 Cor. 11:5), i.e., both her own head and her husband who is her “head” (1 Cor. 11:3). A second reason Paul gives is that a man is the “image and glory of God” while a woman is the “glory of man” (1 Cor. 11:7). Paul goes on to explain that,

Indeed, man (ἀνὴρ) was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. For this reason a woman ought to have authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.”

Paul offers yet two more reasons to argue why men should have uncovered heads while women’s heads should be covered: this is what “nature itself teaches” (1 Cor. 11:14) and, what is more, it is an established custom in “the churches of God” (1 Cor. 11:16), a custom to which Paul tells the Corinthian church it, too, must conform itself.

On the surface, it certainly does appear that Paul has in view a vertical relationship between men and women. And, admittedly, Paul’s statements are a bit obscure for those of his later readers and interpreters who are not privy to his original

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70 Fee, First Corinthians, 506; Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 412. Fitzmyer (413) believes that Paul is not referring to an actual practice among Corinthian male prophets but that, instead, he is offering “a rhetorical and hypothetical counterpart” to the real problem which he wishes to address, namely, women prophets with uncovered heads.

71 On the importance of a wife’s veil in Roman law as well as how local authorities enforced social norms, see the discussion in Bruce Winter, Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 83-96.
context and must rely on attempts at reconstruction. To be sure, Paul is very concerned that contemporary norms for modesty be respected. Traditional Mediterranean cultural views regarding proper attire are clearly at work here, particularly in regard to how a woman’s modesty (or perceived lack of it) reflects positively (or negatively) on her family and, in particular, on her father if she was unmarried or on her husband if she was married. This explains the language of “dishonor” and “glory” and Paul’s appeal to women prophets to be mindful of the shame or honor they bring to their families, particularly to the male head of their household, by the way they dress when participating in the Christian assembly. Of course, Paul also offers in these verses a traditional Hellenistic Jewish interpretation of LXX Gen. 2:18-24: the man is the “image and glory of God,” whereas the woman is the “glory” of the man. The man came first; the woman came from the man. Indeed, she was created for the sake of the man. These statements

72 As a matter of fact, because these verses are not all that clear, some scholars consider 1 Cor. 11:3-16 a post-Pauline interpolation with v. 17 as the original (and much smoother) follow-up to v. 2. One of the most ardent supporters of the 1 Cor. 11:3-16 interpolation theory is William Walker who has written a number of essays on this topic: "1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and Paul's Views Regarding Women," JBL 94 (1975): 94-110; "The Vocabulary of 1 Corinthians 11.3-16: Pauline or Non-Pauline?," JSNT 35 (1989): 75-88; "Interpolations in the Pauline Letters," in The Pauline Canon (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 91-126. See also L. Cope, "1 Cor 11:2-16: One Step Further," JBL 97 (1978): 435-436; G. W. Trompf, "On Attitudes toward Women in Paul and Paulinist Literature: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and Its Context," CBQ 42 (1980): 196-215; S. Mount, "1 Corinthians 11:3-16: Spirit Possession and Authority in a Non-Pauline Interpolation," JBL 124 (2005): 313-340. While Walker and those who agree with him may be correct, there is simply not enough compelling evidence (such as textual irregularities in any of the manuscript traditions) to treat 1 Cor. 11:3-16 as an interpolation. See, for example, Jerome Murphy O’Connor’s counter argument, "The Non-Pauline Character of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16?," JBL 95 (1976): 615-621. Murphy O’Connor, although accepting 1 Cor. 14:34-35 as an interpolation (see the discussion below), dismisses the arguments of William Walker regarding 1 Cor. 11:3-16 with the statement that Walker offers only “‘evidence which fits’ as opposed to ‘evidence which proves.’” Finally, if this is an interpolation, it is hard to understand the reason for 1 Cor. 11:11-12 and its recontextualization of verses 3,7-9. (See the discussion below.)
are given as traditional justifications for a woman to have “authority on her head because of the angels.”

Nonetheless, although he echoes traditional ideas shared around the Mediterranean world of his time, Paul gives them a distinctive nuance. The way he speaks about authority, for example, is different from what one would expect from more conventional Hellenistic Jewish interpreters. Unlike his contemporaries, whether Hellenistic Roman or Hellenistic Jewish, Paul does not speak here of a man as having authority over a woman but of a woman as having authority over her own head: Paul’s meaning is that she should exercise better control of how she appears in public. Even more noteworthy are vv. 11-12 which offer a new context for interpreting the more traditional ideas in vv. 3,7-9. In the light of v. 12, male headship takes on the connotation of “source” where the man is understood to be the original “source” for the woman (a reference to LXX Gen. 2:21-23). At the same time, Paul acknowledges that now the

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73 Winter (Roman Wives, Roman Widows, 85-91) offers the intriguing suggestion that ἄγγελοι (literally, “messengers”) in v. 10 is a reference to γυναικονόμοι, “controllers of women,” magistrates known to have existed throughout the eastern Mediterranean whose role was to keep watch over the proper behavior of women in public functions. Citing from a number of contemporary sources, Winter describes how the role of γυναικονόμος would have functioned in first century Greece, including Corinth. Winter also notes that 1 Cor. 14:23, for example, refers to the need for sensitivity regarding the negative opinion of outsiders.

74 Philo is representative in his traditional interpretation of Gen. 2:18 which reinforces a woman’s inferiority vis à vis a man: "Why was not woman, like the other animals and man, also formed from earth, instead of the side of man? First, because woman is not equal in honor with man. Second, because she is not equal in age but younger… Third, he wishes that man should take care of woman as a very necessary part of him; but woman, in return, should serve him as a whole. Fourth, he counsels man figuratively to take care of woman as of a daughter, and woman to honor man as a father" (QG, 1:27; R. Marcus, LCL).

75 Fee, 502; Jerome Murphy O’Connor, "Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," CBQ 42 (1980): 498. See also the discussion on 1 Cor. 7 above on mutual authority in marriage.

76 Murphy O’Connor ("Sex and Logic," 493), for example, states that “the man is the ‘head’ of the woman because he is the source of her being; Paul is thinking in terms of the first creation.” See also Fee,
woman is a “source” for the man in the sense that every man has a mother. Thus both man and woman have their source in each other. In this way, “chronological priority,” the Hellenistic Roman idea that what comes first is superior to what comes after, is applied to both sexes. Indeed, as Paul reminds his audience, all things come from God; while both man and woman find their source in each other, the ultimate source for both man and woman is God alone. Accordingly, ἐν κυρίῳ, “in the Lord,” neither man nor woman has chronological priority, i.e., superiority and the higher social status that comes with it. In fact, “in the Lord,” as Conzelmann observes, “maintains the central Pauline idea that the cancellation of distinctions has its specific place, that they are canceled ‘in the Lord,’ not ‘in us.’”

Remarking on the vocabulary of 1 Cor. 11:11, Raymond Collins states that Paul’s use of πλὴν, “on the other hand,” is “forceful” and intended “to nuance somewhat the one-sided emphasis on woman’s secondary place that has hitherto dominated his discussion.” To be sure, Paul is not advocating here the elimination of gender differences or else he would not insist on different attire and hair style for men and women as they gather for worship. Instead, what Paul is eliminating are the very

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502-503. The author of Colossians is an example of a disciple of Paul who interprets headship in precisely this way as “source.” In Col. 2:19, Christ as head is the source of His body, the Church. See also Chapter Three of this dissertation, note 35.


78 As Murphy O’Connor observes, “The fact that man is born of woman is just as much an effect of the divine intention as the different ways in which the two sexes were created (τα δε παντα εκ του θεου), but the significance of this became apparent only in the light of the mission of Christ: κεφαλη de tou Christou ho theos (v. 3c),” (“Sex and Logic,” 498).


80 Raymond Collins, First Corinthians (SP 7; ed. Daniel Harrington; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 403.
human rankings of superiority/inferiority. These have no place for those who are “in the Lord.” In any event, nowhere in this discussion in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 does Paul teach that females are to exercise their prophetic role any differently from that of the males. They are simply to dress according to the expectations of the time regarding modest apparel.\textsuperscript{81}

Undeniably, one of Paul’s major teachings—and one based on his baptismal theology—is his insistence on the essential unity in Christ of all the baptized, as we see in Gal. 3:26-28:

\begin{quote}
26 In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. 27 As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

This passage from Galatians echoes Paul’s teaching on unity in 1 Cor. 12:13: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Galatians, however, adds a third pair to this list, the dyad \textit{ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ}, “male and female,” which, because of its difference in wording from the two preceding pairs (the substitution of \textit{kai}, “and,” for \textit{oude}, “or”), may be an

\textsuperscript{81} For a more developed discussion of Paul’s ideas regarding appropriate dress and hairstyle for worship see Murphy O’Connor, "Sex and Logic"; Richard Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4," \textit{NTS} 34 (1988): 481-505; Gillian Beattie, \textit{Women and Marriage in Paul and His Early Interpreters} (JSNTS Supplemental Series 296; ed. Mark Goodacre; New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 39-61. See also Winter, \textit{Roman Wives, Roman Widows}, especially Chapter 5: “The Appearance of Unveiled Wives in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” 77-96. Winter offers some convincing arguments that what Paul is insisting on here is conformity to Roman custom as a way to avoid negative criticism from outsiders (1 Cor. 14:23).

\textsuperscript{82} A number of scholars suggest that Gal. 3:28 is an early Christian baptismal formula because of its similarity to 1 Cor. 12:13 and Col. 3:11. See the discussion in Frank J. Matera, \textit{Galatians} (SP 9; ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S.J; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 146-147. More recently, however, Troy Martin ("The Covenant of Circumcision \{Genesis 17:9-14\} and the Situational Antitheses in Galatians 3:28," \textit{JBL} 122 [2003]:111-125) has questioned the idea that Gal. 3:28 is a baptismal formula, positing that if it were, the language of the formula would be more fixed. As Martin points out (111-115), neither 1 Cor. 12:13 nor Col. 3:11 shares the same language of Gal. 3:28 and both are missing the third pair of the triad in Gal. 3:28, \textit{ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ}, “male and female.”
allusion to LXX Gen. 1:27 and the creation of the human—both male and female—κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ, in the Divine image. At the same time, the addition of this third dyad, male and female, is a component of Paul’s larger argument in Galatians that baptism, not circumcision, is the marker of incorporation into Christ, and therefore incorporation into God’s people. Unlike circumcision with its restrictions to males, whether Jews or the slaves belonging to Jewish households, baptism is for all, whether Jews or non-Jews, slaves or freeborn, and it includes both males and females.83

With this in mind, we must be careful here because, when read in the context of Paul’s larger argument in Galatians regarding the uselessness of Torah observance (and, with it, circumcision) to make one just in God’s sight, whatever Paul’s later interpreters do with Gal. 3:26-28,84 Paul himself may not have written this passage with an intentionally egalitarian purpose in mind.85 This is because Galatians is not written with the purpose of describing egalitarian relations in the Church; it is written to offer arguments to Gentiles as to why they should not be persuaded by Christian Judaizers who insist on Torah observance along with faith in Christ. In fact, elsewhere Paul does not

83 Troy Martin (“Covenant of Circumcision,” 117-120) observes that the first person in each pair is the one required by Torah to be circumcised. Regarding “slave or free,” Martin claims that this is an allusion to Gen. 17:12-13 where the non-Israelite slaves of an Israelite household were required to be circumcised whereas the non-Israelite freeborn hired workers were not.

84 In some strands of later Christian interpretation, this verse does take on a different meaning as it becomes read outside of its original context. See the discussion of the interpretation of Gal. 3:28 in Gnostic and apocryphal works in Hans Dieter Betz, Galatians (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 194-196.

85 As Troy Martin (“The Covenant of Circumcision,” 124) cautions, “Galatians 3:28 articulates a common entrance requirement that ignores cultural, social, and sexual differences and provides for the full membership of all the baptized. It does not, however, explain how this full membership is understood... Even though they may not reflect Paul’s own practice, later [household] codes are not necessarily in tension with Gal 3:28, since everyone addressed in these codes is considered a full member of the community.” This is an important point to which we will return in the discussion in Chapter Six regarding the differences in the way Paul is interpreted at the end of the first century.
insist on eliminating the distinctions in regard to ethnicity or social class. In Romans, for example, he states three times the order of “first the Jew, then the Gentile” in regard to salvation (Rom. 1:16), judgment (Rom. 2:9), and reward (Rom. 2:10). Nor does Paul, a practical man, dare to challenge in any of his letters the moral legitimacy of the Greco-Roman institution of slavery. Instead, he counsels slaves to accept their status as such while at the same time he encourages them to take advantage of any legal opportunity for manumission. He does, however, go on to state that a believing slave is a “free person in the Lord,” just as the believing free person is a “slave of Christ” (1 Cor. 7:21-22). What is more, Paul encourages Philemon to accept his slave Onesimus “no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother . . . both in the flesh and in the Lord” (Phlm. 1:16).

In other words, Paul is not the most clear or consistent of writers. There may be reason for this, however, especially in regard to longstanding traditional vertical relationships considered to be an integral part of contemporary Roman notions of morality and social order. While, at least in his letters, Paul does not openly challenge vertical relationships as immoral or unjust (he is much too careful for that), he

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87 For centuries slavery was part of the very fabric of Mediterranean societies and repeatedly justified on moral grounds (Aristotle, Pol. 1, 2; Suetonius, Augustus, 40). To challenge it openly would be to risk being accused of upsetting a centuries old moral order and perhaps even potentially fomenting a slave rebellion.

88 See the extended discussion on the appropriation of Aristotelian ethics in the early imperial period in David L. Balch, Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981).
nonetheless offers his audience another way to relate to each other “in the Lord”—as “brother” and “sister,” frequent titles found throughout his letters.89 This becomes eminently clear in regard to the most vertical relationship known in the world of his time, that between slaves and masters. Hence, when Paul counsels Philemon to relate to his slave Onesimus as “more than a slave, a beloved brother” he is insisting in a rather careful and delicately nuanced way that baptism has important implications for the relationships shared among those whom it makes “one in Christ” (Gal. 3:26-28).

In the light of how Paul deals with the master-slave relationship, in one place acknowledging the traditional expectation (1 Cor. 7:22) but then delicately challenging it when it comes to real people (Paul’s letter to Philemon), Paul does indeed seem to promote the eradication of traditionally-ranked vertical relationships. The same pattern can be observed in regard to Paul’s teaching on gender relations. We saw above how Paul recontextualizes the traditional ideas stated in 1 Cor. 11:3,7-9 with a newer understanding “in the Lord,” as he explains in 1 Cor. 11:11-12. This new context “in the Lord,” becomes more apparent in his discussion about real life relationships, such as his insistence on conjugal equality between married partners (1 Cor. 7) or the respectful and warm way—never condescending or patronizing—in which he writes about his women co-workers (Rom. 16). In regard to these real life relationships, a different value system emerges altogether in which all the baptized, without the distinctions of social rankings of

89 In fact, as Robert Banks observes, Paul’s frequent vocative use of ἀδελφοί (“brothers and sisters”) throughout his letters is “far and away Paul’s favorite way of referring to the members of the communities to whom he is writing.” See Banks, Paul’s Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 50-51. This is in sharp contrast, by the way, to the striking absence of this vocative form of address in deutero-Pauline literature, with the single exception of 2 Thessalonians (which imitates 1 Thessalonians).
any kind, are equally “beloved by God” (1 Thes. 1:4), “children of God in Christ Jesus through faith” and men and women “clothed with Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). To put it another way, while Gal. 3:28 may not have been originally intended by Paul as a statement on egalitarianism, nonetheless, it reflects his own relationships and those he fostered in his churches in which unity in Christ through baptism does indeed make a difference in how the baptized should relate to each other “in the Lord.”

1 Cor. 14:34-35: Genuine Pauline Teaching or an Interpolation?

When we take into consideration what Paul has to say about women and wives in his undisputed letters, 1 Cor. 14:34-35 presents a number of contradictions. Certainly, it is a direct contradiction of Paul’s instructions earlier in the same letter to women prophets where he takes for granted that they pray and prophesy just as do the men who are prophets (1 Cor. 11:5). After all, if a prophet is to prophesy, then silent women prophets are an oxymoron. They simply cannot fulfill their function; they can no longer serve as prophets. Moreover, 1 Cor. 14:34-35 presumes that all the women in the congregation are not only married but married to believers. Yet Paul’s teaching earlier in the same letter presumes both widows and intentionally single women in the congregation, women who remain unmarried as a way to dedicate themselves to the Lord without the distraction of trying to please a husband (1 Cor. 7:34). In fact, Paul counsels women to remain unmarried because, he believes, they will be happier that way (7:40)! Not only that, but Paul’s teaching on conjugal equality in 1 Cor. 7 is in direct opposition to the submission required of wives in 14:34-35. Finally, Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7:13 presumes that some women are married to unbelieving husbands who likely do not attend the household
church gatherings. So many clear contradictions, both with Paul’s earlier teachings in the same letter and with his stated appreciation and value for the leadership of women throughout his undisputed letters, offer good reason to suspect that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is not written by Paul.

But even beyond the overwhelming internal evidence for interpolation, these two verses are problematic textually in a number of ways. To begin with, they interrupt the flow of thought between 1 Cor. 14:33 and 1 Cor. 14:36, part of an extended teaching on prophecy which begins with 1 Cor. 14:1 and concludes with 1 Cor. 14:40. Here we will begin with v. 26 of Paul’s extended teaching regarding the contributions and limits of prophecy in the gatherings of the household church:

26 What should be done then, brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί)? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. 32 And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, 33 for God is a God not of disorder but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.90

34 Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

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90 Although in contemporary English translations, v. 33b is a sentence with v. 34, this is not so clear in Greek. In fact, a number of manuscripts end v. 33b with διδάσκω or a related word (F, G, 326, 330, 629, 1243, 1315, 1319, 1837, 2400, 2815, 440*, 365, 1573). This suggests that v. 33b was read as separate from v. 34.
36 Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones (μόνους) it has reached? 37 Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. 38 Anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized. 39 So, brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί), be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; 40 but all things should be done decently and in order.

Both verse 26 and verse 39 address the ἀδελφοί, the “brothers and sisters,” of the church of Corinth. It is worth noting that ἀδελφοί in both verses is masculine plural, i.e., grammatically it can refer either to a masculine plural subject or a subject of mixed gender. Moreover, the plural “you” of v. 36 (“Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?”) is clearly masculine: μόνους (“alone,” “only”) is the masculine accusative plural which better corresponds grammatically with the antecedent, ἀδελφοί (“brothers and sisters”) of v. 26. Grammatically, then, there is reason to question what an address directed only at women in vv. 34-35 is doing in this passage. In fact, vv. 34-35 appear to be an interruption; the removal of these verses would take nothing away from the integrity of the passage. On the contrary, the passage itself makes more sense, grammatically and contextually, without these verses.91

Yet other clues, as well, suggest that this is a post-Pauline interpolation. For example, there is no agreement among ancient manuscripts with where vv. 34-35 are placed.92 What is more, vv. 33-35 are set apart from the rest of the surrounding text in a

91 According to Conzelmann, “this self-contained section upsets the context: it interrupts the theme of prophecy and spoils the flow of thought.” See Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 246.

92 Nearly all the Western text type manuscripts place vv. 34-35 after v. 40, the most notable among them being D, E, F, G, , a, b, itardc, e, f, g, Ambrosiaster, Sedulius Scotus. However, at least two manuscripts considered to be from a non-Western text type, 88* and the Vulgate manuscript Regensis, place vv. 34-35 after v. 33. See the discussion on 1 Cor. 14:33-35 and ancient manuscripts in Philip B. Payne, "Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor. 14:34-35," NTS 41 (1995): 240-262. Payne also highlights the curious case of the Latin Codex Fuldensis (c. 545 CE) which signals the reader to skip over vv. 34-35 and
number of ancient manuscripts by an extended space both before and after these verses.  

Finally, the language of vv. 34-35 resembles that of 1 Tim. 2:11-15 in its insistence on women’s silence and submission, its appeal to “the Law,” or Torah, as justification for a woman’s subordinate position, and its expectation that women will be married (1 Tim. 2:13-15/Gen. 3:1-16). Thus, for all these reasons—the internal inconsistencies with what Paul writes elsewhere in both 1 Corinthians and his other letters, the interruption of thought that these verses present for their immediate context, the disagreement in the

to continue, instead, with v. 36 written in the lower margin. See also the discussion in Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 705-710. Both Fee and Payne account for the disparity in regard to the placement of vv. 34-35 by concluding that the Vorlage from which all text type families of manuscripts are descended had vv. 34-35 in the margin, written there at a very early time. Sometime later, a copyist placed these originally marginal verses after v. 33, while a different copyist placed them after v. 40. The Western text type is descended from the latter’s copy, while others are descended from the former. Payne (248) points out that among the early Church Fathers who discuss 1 Corinthians 14, only Tertullian (160-225 CE) seems to know vv. 34-35 (Bap. 15.17). Clement of Alexandria (150-215 CE), for example, while discussing the roles of men and women in church, cites extensively from 1 Corinthians 14, yet, surprisingly, he seems completely unaware of vv. 34-35 (Paed. 3.11; Strom. 4.19), suggesting that his copy of 1 Corinthians does not have these problematic verses. See also Philip B. Payne, "Ms. 88 as Evidence for A Text without 1 Cor. 14.34-35,” NTS 44 (1998): 152-158. Similarly helpful is the recent discussion in Richard I. Pervo, The Making of Paul, 46-47. Pervo maintains that the varied location of these verses indicates that they were not present in some early witnesses.

93 These are 𝔓⁶⁶, Sinaiticus (𝔓), Alexandrinus (א), Ephraemi (C), Claromontanus, among others. See the list for these and others in Payne, 251, and in note 40 of the same page. Payne states that every ancient Greek manuscript he examined showed some peculiarity in the way vv. 34-35 were separated from the rest of the text. Payne also discusses the irregularities in Vaticanus (B) in regard to vv. 34-35 and includes a photo (262). Codex Sinaiticus can be viewed easily online where verses 34-35 are indeed set apart from the rest of the text by a space before and after: http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=38&chapter=14&lid=en&side=r&verse=33&zoomSlider=0.

94 The word used in 1 Tim. 2:11 is ὑποταγή, the substantival form of the verb ὑποτάσσω, “[to be] subordinate.”  

95 Of course, it is uncharacteristic of Paul (who insists, by the way, that with Christ the Law no longer applies) to make an appeal to the Law for support. In fact, these appeals to the Law in both 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-15 are both atypical from what we see in Paul’s undisputed writings. See Payne’s discussion of the parallels in both vocabulary and content between 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:9-15 in Fuldeansis, 248-249. Nonetheless, while there is no parallel elsewhere with Paul’s undisputed letters, there is, however, a parallel with Josephus’ own statement that the Law (Torah) demands the subordination of women (C. Ap. 2.1.24).
early manuscripts over the placement of these verses, textual irregularities of these verses found throughout the ancient manuscripts, and the similarities in both thought and vocabulary with the Pastoral Epistles—the majority of scholars today suspect that 1 Cor. 14:33-35 is indeed a classic example of textual interpolation.96 Because all the ancient manuscripts have these verses, the scholarly consensus is that they were inserted quite early. Yet, because of their similarities in both thought and language with the Pastoral Epistles, it is generally believed that 1 Cor. 14:34-35, which reflects the concerns of the

96 Conzelmann (1 Corinthians, 246) posits that the interpolation consists of vv. 33b-36, but the textual difficulties in the manuscripts themselves are with vv. 33-35 only. Further, as discussed above, the masculine plural μόνους in v. 36 would preclude women alone as an antecedent. For other scholars in addition to those cited above who hold that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is an interpolation, see C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), 329-333; Robin Scroggs, “Paul and the Eschatological Woman,” JAAR 40 (September 3, 1972): 284; F. F. Bruce, “All Things to All Men: Diversity in Unity and Other Pauline Tensions,” in Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd (ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 94; Wayne Meeks, The First Urban Christians (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 125; Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 117; Gerhard von Dautsenberg, "Zur stellung der Frauen in den paulinischen Gemeinden," Studien zur paulinischen Theologie und zur frühchristlichen Rezeption des Alten Testaments (Giessener Schriften zur Theologie und Religionspädagogik 13; Giessen: Selbstverlag des Fachbereichs, 1999), 231-242; David Balch, "Paul, Families, and Households," in Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook (ed. J. Paul Sampley; New York: Trinity Press International, 2003), 282-283, and 292 note 17. Balch (292, note 17) explains the interpolation as a development from key words already found early in the same passage: “In 1 Cor. 14:32, Paul, discussing charismatic speaking in tongues, writes that ‘the spirits of the prophets are subject [ὑποτάσσεται, hypotassetai] to the prophets.’ An editor saw this verb, the key verb in deutero-Pauline household codes (e.g., Col 3:18; Eph 5:21; cf. 1 Pet 3:1), and interpolated a familial subordinationist ethic into 1 Corinthians. Further, Paul wrote that when one charismatic receives a revelation, another is to be ‘silent’ (1 Cor 14:30), a second key idea in traditional, misogynist ethics (Aristotle, Pol. 1 1260a 31; 1 Tim 2:11-12), which the deutero-Pauline editor read into 1 Cor 14:35, despite the contradiction with 11:5.”

A representative opposing opinion is given by Antoinette Clark Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 149-152, 229-233. Clark, however, overlooks the contradictions with 1 Cor. 7 where Paul presumes that some women in the congregation are widows (1 Cor. 7:34) while others will be without believing husbands (7:13). Neither does she adequately explain the contradictions with 1 Cor. 11:5, or why the restrictions toward women’s speech are placed where they are and not in the instruction to women prophets in 1 Cor. 11. Nor does she account for why the instructions to wifely subordination are not found in Paul’s teaching on marriage in 1 Cor. 7. Further, Wire presumes that any interpolation could not have occurred early in the manuscript tradition. She thus overlooks the Church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria whose exegetical discussions on 1 Cor. 14 and the roles of men and women in church show a surprising lack of awareness concerning 1 Cor. 14:34-35 (Paed. 3.11; Strom. 4.19), suggesting that these verses were not known to him. (See note 93 above.)
Pastorals to limit the roles of women in the churches, was likely inserted either around the same time that the Pastoral Epistles were composed or slightly later. Accordingly, the weight of evidence goes against the acceptance of 1 Cor. 14:34-35 as genuine Pauline teaching regarding the subordination of wives to husbands. This leads to an important conclusion, namely, that there is no good reason to believe that the author of Ephesians even knows 1 Cor. 14:34-35—these verses would have been scribbled in the margin of a later second century copy of 1 Corinthians, some years or even decades after Ephesians had been written. They represent, then, not Paul’s teaching on marriage but the expectations of mainstream Greco-Roman culture. On the contrary, what Paul does have to say about subordination can be summarized in Gal. 5:13: “through love, become slaves to each other.”

Paul’s Undisputed Letters: Summary and Conclusion

When we look at Paul’s undisputed writings regarding relationships with cultural “inferiors,” i.e., slaves and women, what we see is a two-fold pattern of both acknowledgment of deeply entrenched traditional vertical relationships and a gentle

97 The Roman writer Juvenal, a contemporary of the author of the Pastorals, shows how representative the thinking of 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-12 is to the general Greco-Roman male culture when he writes, “. . . She’s much worse, the woman who as soon as she’s taken her place at dinner is praising Virgil and forgiving Elissa on her deathbed, who pits the poets against one another and assesses them, weighing in her scales Maro on this side and Homer on the other. The schoolteachers give way, the teachers of rhetoric are beaten, the whole party falls silent, there’ll not be a word from any lawyer or auctioneer—and not even from another woman. Such vigorous verbiage pours from her, you’d say it was the sound of people bashing all their bowls and bells at once. . . Don’t let the lady reclining next to you have her own rhetorical style or brandish phrases before hurling her rounded syllogism at you. Don’t let her know the whole of history. Let there be a few things in books that she doesn’t even understand. I loathe the woman who is forever referring to Palaemon’s Grammar and thumbing through it, observing all the laws and rules of speech, or who quotes lines I’ve never heard, a female scholar. Do men bother about such things? It’s the language of her philistine girlfriends she should be criticizing. Husbands should be allowed their grammatical oddities. The fact of the matter is that the woman who longs to appear excessively clever and eloquent should hitch up a tunic knee high, sacrifice a pig to Silvanus, and pay just a quarter to enter the baths, [all marks of being a man]. (Sat. 6.434-459; Braund, LCL).
redirection toward more horizontal relationships. We have already seen, for example, Paul’s statements that slaves should accept their status as slaves (1 Cor. 7:21) and that a husband, of course, is the head of his wife (1 Cor. 11:3). Both of these statements reflect dominant views in the Greco-Roman world of Paul’s time. And Paul is careful not to challenge outright centuries-old Greco-Roman institutions and cultural traditions. At the same time, when reading his letter collection as a whole, we see him encouraging the members of his churches to relate with each other in such a way that traditional Greco-Roman vertical relationships between cultural superiors and inferiors are to be transformed “in the Lord.” Social status and the rankings of superior/inferior have no place among the baptized where all are brothers and sisters to each other. This is because, in Paul’s view, incorporation into Christ—baptism—changes everything (Gal. 3:26-28). Thus, a slave becomes “more than a slave, a dear brother in the Lord” (Phlm. 1:16), while a wife is accorded the respect and consideration of a truly mutual partner in an exclusive, faithful, and monogamous lifetime relationship (1 Cor. 7). Paul’s own relationships with women, as we see these reflected in his genuine correspondence, give evidence of the way in which he regarded them as co-workers, office-holders, patrons, prophets, and even fellow apostles.

Admittedly, however, the weight of centuries of tradition reinforcing the subordination of women becomes an issue in Paul’s later interpreters. The authors of Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles, with an emphasis on proper (i.e., vertical) Greco-Roman household order, represent one direction in which Paul’s later interpreters take his teaching. The author of Ephesians, on the other hand, with a stress on mutual marital
subordination, represents another. In the following chapter, we will look at how the author of Ephesians appropriates and adapts the traditions inherited from Paul in regard to gender relations. We will also explore what this epistle suggests about the variability in the way marriage partnerships were regarded in the early Church as well as examine the problematic hermeneutical history of Eph. 5:21-33 as it becomes read in the light of Col. 3:18 and the Pastoral Epistles.
CHAPTER SIX

EPHESIANS 5:21-33 AND ITS PLACE IN PAULINE TRADITION:
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

After looking at the various pieces involved in a study of Eph. 5:21-33, e.g., its relationship to Col. 3:18-19, its structure, an exegesis of its key words, and Paul’s own teaching on marriage and gender relations as the claimed source for this passage, we are now ready to put all these together in order to respond thoughtfully to the questions posed at the beginning of our investigation: In what way is the marital code of Ephesians in continuity with or in opposition to its sources within Pauline tradition and, in particular, Paul’s own teaching on gender relations in his undisputed letters? Further, as we saw in Chapter Two, the author of Ephesians revises the household code of Colossians in ways that betray a certain resistance to the non-negotiable quality of the domestic hierarchical order of Colossians. Why does Ephesians, which claims Pauline authority and authorship along with Colossians and later the Pastoral Epistles, not echo their own unequivocal affirmation of traditional Greco-Roman gender mores? In other words, how does Ephesians make use of Pauline tradition for its own household code and why, at least in regard to idealized Christian gender relations, is Ephesians so notably different, in ways both significant and subtle, from other New Testament epistles which likewise claim their origin in Paul?
To answer these questions, we will review the major points discussed in the previous chapters and place them together as various pieces of a larger puzzle. Here, however, we will take a more chronological approach and begin first with Paul and then move on to Paul’s interpreters. From there, we will look at what happens when Eph. 5:21-33 becomes read and interpreted in later Christian tradition, not according to the author’s own distinctive message, but in the light of the other Pauline pseudonymoi (Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles). Finally, we will close our discussion with a brief consideration regarding what the author of Ephesians has to say of import to Christian readers today.

**Paul’s “Good Order” in Regard to Gender Relations**

In Chapter Five we looked at Paul’s instructions on gender relations in his churches and we observed both an acknowledgement of traditional Greco-Roman expectations (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:3) as well as an insistence on conjugal equality shared between Christian partners (1 Cor. 7). We saw how women have important roles in Paul’s churches, serving as deacons and patrons (Rom. 16:1; Phil. 1:1), apostles (Rom. 16:7), prophets (1 Cor. 11), and leaders and organizers of household churches (Rom. 16:1-12; 1 Cor. 1:11; 16:19; Phil. 4:2-3; Phlm. 2; Col. 4:15). Indeed, Paul shows no reticence in calling such women his “co-workers” who, like himself, have toiled hard and taken great risks for Paul’s sake and that of sharing the Gospel message (Rom. 16:4,6,7,12). Nor can there be found in his undisputed writings any clear statement on women’s subordination to men in general, or on a wife’s subordination to her husband in particular, certainly nothing as unquestionable as what is found in Col. 3:18 and later the Pastoral Epistles (1
Tim. 2:11; Titus 2:5). Had Paul believed that his Gospel supported vertical relationships between a believing husband and wife, one would expect to find such statements in his teaching on marriage in 1 Cor. 7, especially as he intends his teachings to promote “good order” (πρὸς τὸ εὔσχημον, 1 Cor. 7:35) among the Corinthian Christians. On the contrary, as we saw in the previous chapter, Paul addresses the women leaders in his churches in a way that recognizes their own autonomy apart from their male relatives. In the light of his expectation of an imminent end of the age, he even goes so far as to encourage women who are unattached to a man to remain so (1 Cor. 7:40). In regard to married couples, Paul insists on a husband’s exclusive sexual fidelity to his wife (1 Cor. 6-7), something which was not the common expectation of the time. Indeed, when taken altogether, Paul gives far more instructions about a husband’s proper moral conduct than about a wife’s (1 Cor. 5-7). And, what is more, he insists that both husband and wife have an equal say in regard to how they are going to live together as spouses (1 Cor. 7): not only does a husband have conjugal rights over his wife (the common expectation), but a wife, too, has conjugal rights over her husband (not the common expectation); not only might a husband have need for time apart for prayer, but a wife, too, has the same need. Both husband and wife are to be considerate of the other’s needs, both for time apart as well as for time together. For Paul, Christian marriage is a shared partnership built upon mutual respect and consideration. Unlike others of his time, his instructions on proper marital relationships avoid giving priority or superior status to one gender over the other.2

1 See the discussion in Chapter Five on 1 Cor. 14:34-35 and the number of compelling reasons for which the majority of scholars view it as a later scribal insertion and not as originating with Paul himself.

2 Commenting on Paul’s instructions to married couples in 1 Cor. 7, Richard B. Hays observes that
To put it another way, Paul’s own teaching, in and of itself, does not do much to uphold traditional Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish gender hierarchies. What Paul does say in 1 Cor. 11:3 about a man’s headship and explained a few verses later in 11:7-9 with a Hellenistic Jewish interpretation of Gen. 1-3 is qualified by how gender relations among Christians are lived differently “in the Lord,” where chronological priority and the gender hierarchy which it supports make no real sense for those who form one Body in Christ (1 Cor. 11:11-12; 12:12-27; Rom. 12; Gal. 3:26-28). This is not to say that Paul eliminates this very traditional idea of a man’s headship, only that, in the light of his writings as a whole, both within 1 Corinthians as well as the rest of his undisputed letters, it becomes understood differently. The head of a Christian man, for example, is Christ (1 Cor. 11:3)—and that makes all the difference, as we see in his instructions to husbands in 1 Cor. 7 to give their wives the same consideration they expect from them. Whereas culturally a man’s headship is described in terms of a husband’s control of his wife, or a wife’s subservience to her husband, Paul makes no such statement. Instead, in place of relationships of superiority and inferiority, part of the fabric of Greco-Roman social order, Paul instructs the baptized—whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, woman or man (Gal. 3:28)—to “through love, be slaves to each other” (διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις, Gal. 5:13). This is because, for Paul, the baptized are all brothers and sisters to

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3 Aristotle, Politics, 1.1259b; 1.2.12; Plutarch, Conj. praec. 142E.33.

4 Philo, QG, 1:27. See note 74 in Chapter Five.
each other, children of the same Father (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26-28; 4:6; 2 Cor. 6:18; Phil. 2:15). Traditional Greco-Roman social rankings of superiority/inferiority are out of place among the baptized who form one family—indeed one Body—in Christ. The old order has already passed away while a new one has emerged (2 Cor. 5:17). Those who are baptized into Christ and who form one Body with him must now live according to this new order.

Paul Reinterpreted: Colossians and Ephesians

Of course, in Paul’s view, the eschaton is imminent. A generation after Paul, however, the eschaton still has not yet arrived. Paul’s freedom in regard to more horizontal relationships, especially with women and slaves, is easier to accept at a time when there is a strong expectation of an imminent eschaton on the horizon. In the years and decades following his death, however, Paul’s churches have to deal with the realities of pressure from the larger Greco-Roman culture to conform to the norms of imperial society which uphold hierarchical order, beginning with “ordered” (i.e., vertical) relationships in the household. Some of Paul’s heirs are less concerned about an imminent eschaton than with acceptability to the outside society. In general, this is seen in the emphasis in the Pauline pseudonymoi on Greco-Roman ordered household management, obedience to governmental authority, and repeated cautions regarding outsiders and their negative opinions. In this way, Paul’s earlier freedom in regard to the mutual and more horizontal relationships of “brothers” and “sisters” in his churches gives way after his death to the accommodation among some of his heirs to the social rankings of the dominant culture.
The household code of Col. 3:18-4:1 represents the earliest surviving affirmation in Pauline literature of traditional Greco-Roman ideals regarding hierarchically ordered household relationships. For example, the notion in Col. 3:18 of a wife’s subordination to her husband is based on Greco-Roman (and Hellenistic Jewish) ideas of morality and proper household (and societal) order,⁵ and not on Paul’s own teachings on marriage as these are found in 1 Cor. 7. With this in mind, Col. 3:18 is evidence that at least some early interpreters of Paul see 1 Cor. 7 as leaving some things unsaid. When writing the household code, the author of Colossians, for example, would have viewed himself as simply filling in some of the “gaps” in Paul’s teaching left by his death, perhaps even feeling justified by a more traditional interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:3,7-9 outside of its original context.⁶ Yet unlike anything that Paul himself wrote in his instructions to married couples in 1 Cor. 7, wives are now explicitly instructed to be submissive to their husbands “as is fitting in the Lord.” And, what is more, this instruction in Col. 3:18 is given as if from the very pen of Paul himself, supported by his apostolic authority. Moreover, the author of Colossians not only upholds the traditional Greco-Roman value of wifely subordination but, in contrast to Paul’s own writings (e.g., Philemon), and even in apparent contradiction to his own paraphrase of Gal. 3:28 in Col. 3:11, he emphasizes the duty of slaves to obey their masters “in everything,” in “sincerity, fearing the Lord” (Col. 3:22). Slaves are warned against wrongdoing (Col. 3:24) and reminded that, in serving their masters, they are “serving the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:22-25). Indeed, as we

⁵ A helpful review of Greco-Roman and Hellenistic Jewish writers on household order can be found in David Balch, "Household Codes," in Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament (ed. David Aune; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988), 25-50.

⁶ See the discussion in Chapter Five on 1 Cor. 7 and 11.
saw in Chapter Two, more space is given to the instructions to slaves in the household
code of Col. 3:18-4:1 than to any other group. Unmistakably, then, Col. 3:18-4:1 upholds
traditional Greco-Roman hierarchical order and the authority of the *paterfamilias* as
wives, children, and slaves are all instructed to take their proper place in submission and
obedience to him. Of course, he must fulfill his responsibilities to his family: as husband,
he must love his wife and not be harsh with her, as father he must not “provoke” his
children, and as slave master, he must act justly and fairly remembering that he, too,
serves another Master. All the same, despite its instructions on the duties of the
*paterfamilias* as husband, father, and slave owner, Col. 3:18-4:1 supports the traditional
Greco-Roman view of relationships as essentially vertical and hierarchical with inferiors
knowing their place in obedience and submission to the person of the higher rank.

In contrast to Colossians and in a manner much more in keeping with Paul’s own
more tactful and nuanced approach to describing new relationships “in the Lord,” the
author of Ephesians offers another way to interpret Pauline teaching where traditional
Greco-Roman relationships based on submission of inferiors to superiors are replaced by
mutually subordinate relationships based on love and respect. As we saw in Chapter Two,
when composing the household code of 5:21-6:9, the author borrows heavily from Col.
3:18-4:1, following the same general sequence and order and using much of the same
vocabulary. Nonetheless, despite its obvious use of the household code of Colossians,
Eph. 5:21-6:9 is different from it in a number of significant ways. The differences
between the two household codes, in fact, are so significant that Eph. 5:21-6:9 may
rightly be considered a revision of Col. 3:18-4:1.
The ways the author of Ephesians revises the household code of Colossians are both subtle and not so subtle, and these are all interconnected and overlap. Here we will discuss the most salient: 1) To begin with, unlike Col. 3:18-4:1 which appears as an insertion unconnected thematically to what comes before it or after, Eph. 5:21-6:9 is fully integrated into the epistle, both in its immediate context and as a whole, so that the instructions regarding a Christian household are all of a piece with the paraenetical instructions in the latter half of the epistle, beginning with 4:1. These instructions remind readers of the lived-out consequences of their baptism, their unity in Christ as members of his Body, and what that implies in regard to how they are to treat one another (4:1-7). Indeed, the paraenesis into which the household code is embedded in the second half of the epistle is the logical response to the meditations on God’s love and call in the first half of the epistle.

To explain this latter point brings us to a second and overlapping way in which the author of Ephesians revises the household code of Colossians: 2) Far more than offering a mere set of rules of Christian conduct, the author composes the household code in such a way as to develop on the microcosmic scale a reflection of the heavenly household where power is for service and service is for the sake of “building up the Body of Christ” (4:8-13). From the very beginning of the epistle, there is a paterfamilias in view, here, too, but far more than in Colossians, emphasis is placed on God as Father who, with great love, generosity, and largesse, adopts the baptized as his beloved children (1:4-5), showering them with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (1:4). This is the “Father of glory” (1:17), the “one God and Father of all, who is above all and
through all and in all” (4:6), “from whom every fatherhood (πατριά) gets its name” (3:15), described in the most superlative terms as possessing great riches, power, and strength, which he lavishly puts to use on behalf of his beloved children, not only on Christ’s behalf, his beloved son whom he raised from the dead and exalted at his right hand (1:19-20), but also on that of the baptized, whom he raised up with Christ, seating them also in the heavenly places with himself (2:6), making them his beloved children and members of the Divine household and fellow-citizens with the saints (2:19). This the Father did “out of the great love with which he loved” them (2:4) when they had been “dead through trespasses and sins” (2:1). Now, with their baptism, they have been endowed with a new nature, Christ’s own (2:15; 3:16; 4:22-24). By virtue of their baptism, they have become in a very real sense the sons and daughters of the only imperial household that matters. Thus ennobled, together they share the same dignity as God’s beloved children (1:3-8; 2:4-10; 5:1-2).

In view of the Father’s extravagance toward them in adopting them as his own children, the readers are exhorted at the beginning of the paraenesis to “live a life worthy of [their] calling, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love” (4:1). They must, then, as beloved children of God, imitate their Father in his Divine largesse and generous love in their treatment of one another (5:1-2). They are children of light now and must live as such (5:8), no longer like the Gentiles they once were, darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God, and hardened of heart (4:17-18). By implication, there is no rank among them since all are exalted, all are beloved, all are raised up with Christ and seated with him (2:6)—without exception. This
is so because the Father liberally showers his love, blessing, grace, and gifts upon them all (1:3,5-8,18; 2:4,7-8; 4:7), while Christ, in his extreme of humility, has lowered himself in order to bring gifts to them (4:8) and to exalt them. Here, in this household, Christ’s own, humility alone becomes the occasion for exaltation (4:8-10).

The gratuitous love of the Father, Christ’s humility and exaltation, and their own calling and participation in the Divine household—major themes in this epistle—become the subjects of the hymns and songs which the baptized sing together at worship (5:19-20). Their mutual subordination in their celebration of liturgy (5:21) is an expression of the mutual subordination they owe each other as members of the Divine household where grace is given to each one, not for self-promotion or rank, but instead, to equip them all for the “work of service” and “for the building up of the Body of Christ” (4:7,12). The reality of their new life in Christ (2:5), the new nature—Christ’s own—that they have taken up (4:17-24), and their new home in the Divine household (2:19), must find expression in their relationships of mutual service and subordination: these relationships are not for liturgy only but continue to be in place as their new reality, which they celebrate in liturgy, becomes lived out in the Christian family. The author literally brings this point home by shaping v. 21 into a transitional segment which both completes the section on proper behavior at liturgy (5:17-21) and introduces the marital code (5:21-33). In this way the author teaches that the mutually subordinate relationships of the baptized when they worship together as household church (5:17-5:21) must be carried out into the family as they live out their baptismal call in the home (5:21-6:9). To put it another way, the Christian home must be a reflection, in miniature, of the loving, humble, and mutually
self-giving relationships shared in the macrocosm of the Divine household.\(^7\)

This brings us to the most striking revision, related to points 1) and 2) above: 3) The author of Ephesians rewrites the unambiguous command to wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 (Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ, “wives, be subordinate to your husbands as is proper in the Lord”) into an exhortation to mutual subordination in 5:21 (ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ χριστου, “being subordinate to each other out of reverence for Christ”). The author also constructs 5:21 in such a way that it forms part of a longer sentence that begins with 5:17 and finishes with 5:24, the exhortation to wives to be subordinate to their husbands as the Church is to Christ, “in everything.” As we saw in Chapter Two, 5:17-20 has a parallel in Col. 3:16-17 as the author of Ephesians rephrases the content of Colossians. Yet interestingly, Col. 3:18 is not merely rephrased—quite the opposite. Instead, it is rewritten in such a way as to link the idea of wifely subordination in 5:22 to the exhortation to mutual subordination in Eph. 5:21. This brings us to the following observations. First of all, the revision of Col. 3:16-18 into 5:17-24, while quite significant in and of itself, must not be seen merely as the way in which the author smoothly integrates the household code into the paraenesis of the second half of the epistle. Far more is going on than that. Instead, the author rewrites the command to wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 and integrates it into the preceding material on liturgy precisely because such a revision conveys the author’s view of how relationships among the baptized must be lived out, as summarized in points 1) and 2) above: the new reality of baptism, of being raised up and seated with Christ in the

\(^7\) This latter point will become even clearer in our discussion below of the analogy with Christ and the Church.
heavenly places, of becoming members of the Divine household—all that is celebrated and sung in liturgy—must also be lived out in the home. In the Divine household, there is no superior rank among the baptized since all are exalted with Christ. There is only the mutual subordination of the children of God. We have already noted how the author emphasizes this by constructing v. 21 in such a way that it serves as a transition from the discussion on proper behavior at worship in the household church (5:17-21) to proper behavior within the Christian household itself (5:21-6:9). Again, by linking the two both grammatically and thematically, the author teaches that the relationships of mutual subordination to which the baptized are called as members of the worshipping Church must also be lived out in the Christian home.

Secondly, it is worth highlighting that while the command to wives in Col. 3:18 is retained in Eph. 5:22, it is rewritten without a verb or participle, thereby linking it grammatically to the command to mutual subordination in 5:21:

21 ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,  
22 αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ

What is most significant here is how the author reshapes the imperative verb ὑποτάσσεσθε (“be subordinate”) of Col. 3:18, directed only to wives, into the masculine plural participial expression ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις, “being subordinate to each other.” Because it is masculine plural, ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις modifies a subject of mixed gender, i.e., it grammatically also requires husbands. In this way, without eliminating the command to wifely subordination (stated only indirectly, i.e., without a verb or participle,  

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8 In order to highlight the grammatical (and, therefore, conceptual) dependence of v. 22 upon v. 21, a literal translation would be: “21 being subordinate to each other in fear of Christ, 22 wives to your husbands as to the Lord.”
in the earliest text\(^9\)), the author links it grammatically to a new command for mutual subordination in 5:21 which, as noted above, not only completes the instructions on conduct at liturgy but also introduces the household code of 5:21-6:9 and, more immediately, the marital code of 5:21-33. Accordingly, the command to wifely subordination in 5:22-24, which together forms part of the extended sentence that begins with 5:17, should not be read apart from the exhortation to mutual subordination in v. 21. Only when 5:22 becomes read the way the author wrote it, i.e., grammatically linked with 5:21, does the message become most clear that not only are wives to be subordinate to their husbands, but husbands, too, are to be subordinate to their wives. This transforms the relationship of husband and wife from a vertical one of superior and inferior—as is the custom in the outside culture—to a horizontal one where, as members of Christ’s Body, they each owe the other the subordination that Christians owe to Christ (5:21). Indeed, as people who have “learned Christ,” who have heard of him and were “taught in him” (4:20-21), they “must no longer live as the Gentiles” (4:17). The vertical rankings of the Gentile culture in which they were raised prior to knowing Christ must have no place among them.

This latter point becomes clear when we look at 4): the author’s revision of ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ (“as is fitting in the Lord”) in Col. 3:18 into ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ in 5:21, literally, “in fear of Christ.”\(^{10}\) We observed in the exegetical study of 5:21 in Chapter

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\(^9\) The earliest text of Eph. 5:22 is represented by \(\Phi^{56}\), B, Clement \(^{1/2}\), Origen, Greek mss acc. to Jerome, Jerome, Theodore. See the exegetical discussion on Eph. 5:22 in Chapter Three and note 23 in the same chapter.

\(^{10}\) The author revises ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ of Col. 3:18b in two ways. The first way is ἐν φόβῳ...
Three how this expression “in fear of” connotes the idea of subordination. Hence, a Christian’s subordination is given to Christ who alone is Lord (4:5; 6:9). With this in mind, mutual subordination becomes the shared recognition that Christians together form the Church, the Body of Christ (1:23; 3:6; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,30); indeed, they are the very members (μέλη) of Christ’s Body (3:6; 5:30)—his hands, feet, and limbs, while he himself is their head (4:15; 5:23). Because they have “learned Christ” (4:20), because they have indeed “heard of him” and were “taught in him” (4:21), because in baptism they have taken on a new nature (4:22-24), Christ’s own, and are incorporated, literally, into his Body (3:6; 4:4,12-16,25; 5:30), they must follow the lead of their head in his extreme of love, his humility, and his exaltation. Because he alone is their Lord (6:9), they are subordinate only to him (5:21,24).

At the same time, because they all are members of Christ’s Body, they owe each other subordination: the subordination given to a member of Christ’s Body is subordination given to Christ himself. And because they all are incorporated into Christ by virtue of their baptism, their subordination must be reciprocal in character. What is more, as members of Christ’s Body, they are also members of each other (4:25). This implies that what they do to each other they do to themselves (5:29). The subordination that they give to each other is manifested through mutual works of service offered for the sake of “building up the Body of Christ” (4:7,12). In this way, they who together form the Church, live out the Church’s loving and willing subordination to Christ her head (5:24) through their mutual service to each other (4:12; 5:21). Yet Christ, too, lovingly

Χριστοῦ in v. 21. The second way is seen in v. 22b, ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ, and will be discussed below in the remarks on the analogy with Christ and the Church.
and generously cares for his Church, his Body and Bride, as her savior (5:23,25-27,29b).

In fact, Christ’s love for his Bride is such that he “gives himself up” and takes on the role of a servant in her regard, washing her and making her resplendently beautiful (5:2,25-27), just as a servant would wash and beautify a mistress on her wedding day.

This brings us to yet another remarkable way in which the author of Ephesians revises the household code of Colossians: 5) the creation of the analogy with Christ as Head and Husband and his Church as his Body and Bride. This analogy further develops the author’s teaching on the “great mystery of Christ,” cosmic in scope, which is reflected upon throughout the epistle (1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; 6:19). For our author, this great cosmic mystery, unlike anything we see in either Paul or Colossians, is nothing less than the entire cosmos coming under the powerful yet loving headship of Christ (1:9-10), presented in the marital code with Christ as the Head and Spouse of the Universal Church. The Church itself, repeatedly described throughout the epistle as Christ’s Body (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4,12,16; 5:23,30), is portrayed as the cherished Bride for whom Christ gives his life in his extreme of love (5:2,25). Christ’s headship of his Church-Body-Bride functions, not for his own self-promotion or rank, but, instead, to care for his Church as “savior of his Body” (5:23). His is an extreme of love whereby he “gives himself up” totally for his Beloved, even to the point of dying for her (5:2,25). This makes him the “savior of his Body” (5:23). And, as we saw above, his love prompts him to take on the role of servant in regard to his Church-Body-Bride, washing her and making her holy, resplendent, and beautiful (5:26-27). He descends from his heavenly realm to “cleave” to his beloved Bride, and she becomes “one flesh,” “one Body,” with him (4:9-10; 4:4;
5:31). Indeed, he assumes a position of humility and lowliness vis à vis his Beloved in order for her to be exalted and raised up with him and seated with him in his Divine household.

The loving union of the Cosmic Christ with his Universal Church/Body/Bride is THE “great mystery” of the epistle (5:31-32), a mystery which is to be reflected and lived out on the micro-level in the loving union shared between husband and wife, commonly considered in the author’s time as the most basic element of the polis, and indeed, by those who accepted a generally Stoic worldview, even of the entire cosmos. Because the Christian household is but a microcosm of the heavenly household to which the baptized husband and wife belong, the love, generosity, and largesse which characterize the heavenly household (1:3-14,18-19; 2:4-10,19-22; 3:14-21)—that alternative reality where power is for service and service is for the sake of “building up the Body of Christ” (4:7,12-16)—must be mirrored in the Christian home. Just as Christ loves his Church-Body-Bride (5:25,29), a husband is to love and care for his wife. Within the analogy with Christ as Head and Husband of the Church, a husband’s headship becomes re-described in terms of self-sacrificing love (5:25), humble service (5:26), a man’s exaltation of his wife (5:27), and the tender care he gives her “as his own body,” indeed, “his own flesh” (5:28-30). This means that, for a Christian husband, headship is characterized neither by domination, nor control, nor of the servitude of a wife to him as lord of the household, all traditional ways of viewing the husband/wife relationship.¹¹ On the contrary, a Christian husband is repeatedly told that he must pattern his headship on the extreme of love shown

¹¹ See the exegetical discussion on Eph. 5:23 in Chapter Three.
by Christ-Head-Husband for his Church-Body-Bride (5:25-33) who, as we have seen, humbles himself in order to exalt his Beloved.

The other side of this analogy is that of the Church as Christ’s cherished Bride. Filled by his love (1:23; 3:19; 4:13), she is totally receptive to his many gifts (4:8,11-13) and his tender care for her (5:26-29), which all serve to exalt and beautify her (5:27). Willingly, then, she subordinates herself to the saving headship of the One who demonstrates his love by giving himself up for her (5:2,24-25). Her subordination is expressed by her receptivity to all the ways in which he manifests his love for her. Yet, within the context of the broader epistle, much more is implied in her subordination than merely her receptivity to Christ. There is reciprocity, too, in this relationship: even as the Church needs Christ, Christ needs his Church for his work of universal salvation. It is, after all, “through the Church that the wisdom of God is made known” universally (3:10). Likewise, it is through the Church that the “great mystery” of God’s love is revealed (5:32). And it is through the Church that Gentiles can become “fellow heirs” and “sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel” by their incorporation as “members of the same body” (3:6) with “the holy ones” (1:1,4,15,18; 2:19; 5:3). It is thus through the Church that the Head achieves his work of peace, reconciliation, and unity in the formation of one “new humanity” (2:15-16) gathered together and united into his Body. The relationship, then, between Head and Body is one of reciprocity. The Church’s subordination to Christ, then, expresses itself not only in her receptivity to Christ but also in her reciprocity. She not only receives from him, but she also gives to him something of great value. This sort of subordination eschews any kind of subservience. In the same
way, then, in which the Church is subordinate to Christ—with a subordination characterized by receptivity and reciprocity—so, too, must the Christian wife be subordinate to her husband (5:22,24). What is more, because her husband, in accordance with the exhortation to mutual subordination demanded in 5:21, meets her from a position of humility and service, she must reciprocate his subordination to her with her own. This is only just. To put it another way, just as a husband’s headship becomes re-described, as we saw above, within the analogy of Christ as Head, so, too, within the analogy of the Church as Christ’s Body and subordinate Bride, a wife’s subordination becomes re-described as her own response of loving receptivity and reciprocity to her husband “in everything” (5:24). In this way, the author presents an idealized portrait in which both husband and wife are an image in miniature of the reciprocal and loving relationship shared between Christ and his Church.

This brings us to another significant way in which the author of Ephesians revises the household code of Colossians: 6) The single command to husbands to love their wives in Col. 3:19 is repeated three separate times in the marital code of Ephesians (5:25,28,33). Added to this is the author’s insistence that a husband’s care for his wife as her “head” is care for his own body, and “no one would ever hate his own flesh, but tenderly cares for it” (5:29). First husbands are told to love their wives “just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (5:25). Then, after an extended description of Christ’s loving care for his Church-Body-Bride in which his washing and cleansing her—the actions of a servant—renders her resplendently beautiful, husbands are reminded a second time of their obligation to love their wives “as their own body” (5:28).
Finally, once more, at the conclusion of the marital code, husbands—“each one”—are again commanded to “love his wife as himself” (5:33). Not only are husbands reminded three times of their obligation to love their wives, but love is described in terms of Christ’s own self-sacrifice and the great value and esteem in which he holds his Church-Bride. Christ’s love for his Church is not cheap—it cost him *everything*, even his very life. Repeatedly the author insists that this is exactly how a Christian husband is to love his wife.

To emphasize this latter point, the author expands the single command to husbands to love their wives in Col. 3:19 into an extended instruction in Eph. 5:25-33 on the obligation of husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. This brings us to yet another major revision of the household code of Colossians: 7) the change in emphasis from slaves to husbands. In fact, unlike Colossians where the greatest attention is given to the proper behavior of slaves, the segment on husbands constitutes the longest section of the household code of Ephesians where the greatest attention is given to the duty of husbands to love their wives, and great attention, too, is given to describe what genuine love is: self-sacrifice—the “giving oneself up”—for the beloved, after the pattern of Christ’s own love for his Church. Unlike Colossians and its obvious need to protect and uphold the traditionally vertical relationships between husband and wife and master and slave, the household code of Ephesians insists on the mutually subordinate relationships of all who form a Christian household. Even as the author of Ephesians instructs slaves regarding proper attitude and conduct toward their work and their masters, the author also instructs masters to do “the same things” (τὰ αὐτὰ) for their
slaves (6:9). Just as with the exhortation to wifely subordination in 5:22, the traditional role of slaves is not eliminated (6:4). Nonetheless, the strong vertical quality of the master-slave relationship shifts into something more horizontal as the author warns masters that they, too, have a “Master in heaven” to whom they are subordinate and accountable alongside their slaves (καὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ὑμῶν ὁ κύριός ἐστιν ἐν οὐρανοῖς, Eph. 6:9). With stronger language than that found in the parallel in Col. 4:1, the author of Ephesians makes the master a co-slave of Jesus Christ along with the slaves of his household: not only are slaves to “fear the Lord” (Col. 3:22), but both master as well as slave are to “fear Christ” (Eph. 5:21b). To emphasize this, the author transfers the warning made to slaves in Col. 3:25 about there being no partiality with God and inserts it instead at the end of the household code as a warning to masters (Eph. 6:9). The different warnings given to the paterfamilias serve as a stern reminder that he is not the sole Lord of his household. His power, therefore, is not absolute, nor is it for his own sake. On the contrary, it is to be exercised in service toward all the members of his household even as “the One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” exercises his power on behalf of the members of the heavenly household in order to bless them, raise them up, and seat them with himself (1:3-2:10). In the household of God, power is for service and the Christian household ought to be a reflection of God’s own.

To be sure, more could yet be said about the changes made to the household code of Colossians. The list here is not exhaustive. But the revisions discussed above—1) the careful integration of the household code into the paraenetical instructions in the second
half of the epistle, 2) the view of the Christian household as a micro-cosmic reflection of the macro-cosmic household of God, 3) the transformation of the command to wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 into an exhortation to mutual subordination in Eph. 5:21, 4) the revision of ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν κυρίῳ (“as is fitting in the Lord”) in Col. 3:18 into ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ in 5:21, “in fear of Christ,” thereby insisting on subordination to Christ as Lord of all, 5) the analogy with Christ as Head and Husband of the Church and the Church as Christ’s Body and Bride, 6) the three-fold multiplication of the single command in Col. 3:19 to husbands to love their wives, and 7) the change in emphasis from a slave’s proper conduct toward his master to a husband’s proper conduct toward his wife—all give insight into the most significant ways in which the author of Ephesians revises the household code of Colossians to reflect an entirely different view of Christian relationships ordered, not according to Greco-Roman social and gender hierarchies, but on the rules of the new household to which the baptized now belong. In this new household, relationships among the children of God are not vertical but horizontal as each offers, according to the measure of Christ’s grace, his or her own special gift in service to all the rest, for the sake of good works and in order to build up the Body of Christ (4:7-13). This is the setting that the author offers for Christian “subordination”: service given according to the measure of Christ’s gift (4:7,12). Here, in the household of God, the highest in rank is the one who serves the rest. For this reason, in the Christian household, it is not only the wife who serves her husband—a traditional expectation—but the husband who lovingly cares for his wife as “his own body.” His care for his wife becomes his own special form of service “according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” Nor
is it only the slave who serves his master, but the Christian master who must also render
to the slave all that love and respect for Christ requires, and this out of the realization that
both master and slave serve the same Lord with whom “there is no partiality” (6:9).

What might the differences between the two household codes suggest about the
purpose for which each code was written, or their respective author’s view of the roles of
women in the church, or even the sources used by each author? As we saw above, Col.
3:18-4:1 clearly supports the traditional authority and power of the paterfamilias. While
there may be various reasons for this, whether cultural or apologetic or both, nonetheless,
in Colossians the traditional role of the paterfamilias is upheld. At the same time,
however, this role is Christianized as the head of the household is commanded to love his
wife and to treat the other members of his family, e.g., his children and slaves, with
respect and fairness. Accordingly, the purpose of Col. 3:18-6:9 is two-fold: a) to uphold
traditional Greco-Roman ideals regarding hierarchical order in the household and b) to
Christianize these ideals.

If Eph. 5:21-6:9 had the same purpose as Col. 3:18-4:1, then why would the
author rewrite the Colossian household code in so many different ways? In fact, Eph.
5:21-6:9 suggests the author’s resistance to Colossians’ easy acceptance of traditional
hierarchical family relationships, particularly that between husband and wife. Without
entirely eliminating traditional expectations regarding the subordination of wives or the
obedience of slaves—that would be to risk being accused of upsetting the established
social order, even undermining the Roman institution of patria potestas—the author
begins the household code with an exhortation to mutual subordination in 5:21 that
grammatically includes the *paterfamilias* clearly in view in 5:25-6:9. The purpose of Eph. 5:21-6:9, or even the marital code in 5:21-33, is not, then, to uphold traditional ideas regarding hierarchical order. It is, instead, of a piece with the purpose of the epistle as a whole, namely, to instruct new Gentile converts about the new household to which they now belong by virtue of their baptism—God’s own household—and their own special place within it, along with the other members of Christ’s Body. Their new household requires a different ordering of relationships where power is for service and all the members of the family mutually serve each other (4:12; 5:21). The author reminds the Christian *paterfamilias* that he is himself subordinate to the Lord Jesus Christ, the “heavenly Master” who is Lord over all (6:9; 1:10,20-23) and to whom all the members of the Church owe subordination (5:21b,24a). Yet this heavenly Master loves his Church very dearly, gives his life for her sake, washes and cleanses her in the waters of baptism, makes her beautiful, espouses her, and takes her into his Divine home where she is seated with him as a beloved and cherished member of his household.

The way in which both the “Father of all” richly provides for his household, and his son, Jesus Christ, the heavenly Master, deeply loves and humbly cares for those whom he brings into his home is held up as the model for the Christian *paterfamilias*. In this way, without stripping him of his traditional role or power, the author instructs the *paterfamilias* that his power as the head of his earthly household must be exercised in such a way as to bring blessing on all the members of his family. It is not a power for domination, control, rank, or the assertion of his superiority. Like the power of his

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12 See the discussion in Chapter Three on 5:21 and the expression ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ as indicating subordination to Christ.
heavenly Master, Jesus Christ, it is a power for service, for building up. This power, the power exercised in the household of God, is the only real power that endures. All other use of power angers God and will have an end (5:6). In the Christian household, a microcosm of the household of God, the greatest is the one who lovingly and humbly cares for all the rest. In this way, traditional Greco-Roman vertical relationships are transformed into the more horizontal relationships of the sons and daughters of God who serve each other as an expression of their loving subordination to Christ, their one Lord and Love (5:21). Hence, unlike Col. 3:18-4:1 which adds further support to the hierarchical order of the Greco-Roman household, the purpose of the household code of Ephesians is to offer to Gentile Christians a new order, that of Christ’s own household, and a new way of being in relationship with each other, that of members of the Body of Christ.

Besides distinct purposes for these two very different codes of household conduct, Eph. 5:19-21 suggests an entirely different view of the roles of women in both the local household church and the Christian home. These would be women of the second generation Church whose role models would have resembled the women co-workers mentioned by Paul throughout his letters, women like Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, Euodia, and Syntyche. These women leaders—office-holders, prophets, apostles, missionaries, and teachers—some alongside their husband, helped to shape the nascent Church which formed Christian thinkers and writers such as the author of Ephesians. In that sense, Eph. 5:19-21 might very well offer us a glimpse into what a household church gathering would have looked like in the first few decades after Paul’s death with women and slaves
participating alongside the *patresfamilias* in the various roles shared in liturgy. This was the Church that Paul had inspired and promoted, the same Church in which the author had been formed and which the author wished to preserve in Paul’s name and with Paul’s authority.

Thirdly, the difference between the two household codes can also be explained in terms of their different source material. Whereas the author of Colossians, in attempting to fill in a supposed “gap” in Paul’s teachings, takes elements from the larger society, e.g., the institution of *patria potestas* and the widespread belief in the necessity of hierarchical order in the household, the author of Ephesians looks instead not only to Paul’s teachings on conjugal relations in 1 Cor. 7, but also to Paul’s ecclesiology, baptismal theology, Christology, and instructions on Christian relationships, and applies these to the household code of Colossians in such a way as to completely rewrite it. The marital code, for example, begins in v. 21 with a paraphrase of Gal. 5:13 and concludes in v. 33 with a paraphrase of Gal. 5:14, itself a citation of Lev. 19:18. Paul’s teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-27), the incorporation (literally) of the baptized into Christ’s Body in baptism (1 Cor. 12:13), and his remark in

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13 In fact, this view of a local household church in Ephesus parallels what the archaeological evidence tells us regarding the expanding role of women in Ephesus and Asia Minor, both politically and religiously, beginning in the third century BCE but with even greater prominence in the first and early second centuries CE. See Riet van Bremen, “Women and Wealth,” in *Images of Women in Antiquity* (eds. Averil Cameron and Amélie Khurt; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 233. By way of example, Sviatoslav Dmitriv (City Government in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 280, 290-309) observes that in late first century Ephesus the prestigious office of the *prytaneia* became open for the first time to women. In fact, as Dmitriv goes on to explain, women had been city office-holders in Asia Minor since the third century BCE. In the Flavian period, however, Roman governmental control of Ephesus and Asia Minor increases, as does Roman intolerance of even the slightest threat to local instability, perceived or real. For this reason, social associations, particularly new ones, were looked upon with a great amount of scrutiny and suspicion. This certainly would explain the reason for Christian codes of conduct, such as Col. 3:18-4:1, which affirm the Roman institution of *patria potestas*. It would also explain the very careful and nuanced language of Eph. 5:21-6:9.
2 Cor. 11:2 on Christ as the bridegroom of the baptized, become major themes, not only of Ephesians as a whole but of its marital code in particular. This latter point will become clear as we discuss in greater detail the author’s use of traditions inherited from Paul in the following section.

Ephesians 5:21-33 and Traditions Inherited from Paul

In what sense is the author’s vision of the Christian household in general, and the Christian marriage in particular, taken from Paul’s own teachings? In what sense does the author depart from or go beyond Paul? These questions are more complex than they would seem on the surface because so much is involved with Paul, e.g., his baptismal theology, his Christology, ecclesiology, and theological anthropology. We have already observed that Paul himself in his undisputed writings says nothing about the subordination of wives to husbands, neither in his teachings on marriage nor in his remarks about women leaders in his churches. On the contrary, he insists on conjugal equality and even deals with his women co-workers as respected, autonomous adults apart from their husbands. In regard to relationships among the baptized, Paul exhorts them to “be slaves” to each other “through love” (Gal. 5:13). This puts all the baptized on the same level; indeed, Paul even writes that those very human divisions among them related to ethnicity, social class, and gender, all dissolve in the unity the baptized share as sons and daughters of God and members of Christ’s Body (Gal. 3:26-28).

Paul’s ecclesiology, particularly his insistence on the essential unity of the Body of Christ and the mutual service of its members, is a major topic of his undisputed letters. Integraly related to his ecclesiology is his baptismal theology, the idea that the baptized
are members of Christ’s Body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:15; 12:12-27), each with different
gifts to share for the well-being of the whole (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-30). With
baptism, the new Christian takes on a new nature, Christ’s own (Rom. 13:14; 2 Cor. 5:17;
Gal. 3:27), and becomes a child of God (Rom. 8:14-21; 9:8,26; Gal. 3:26; 4:5-6; Phil.
2:15), now called to live in a completely different way from the outside pagan culture
which does not know God.14 Colossians, too, incorporates some of these same themes
from Paul’s baptismal theology, such as putting on a new nature (Col. 3:9-14), and the
formation of the baptized into one Body (Col. 1:18,24; 2:19; 3:15), but baptism and its
implications for relationships between believers are not discussed or even alluded to in
the household code of Colossians. In fact, Paul’s statement in Gal. 3:28 regarding the
unity in Christ which transcends even gender categories becomes paraphrased in Col.
3:11 with the omission of the third pair of Paul’s original triad, “male and female.”15

In contrast to Colossians, the author of Ephesians takes Paul’s baptismal theology
and ecclesiology and incorporates them, not only throughout the rest of the epistle, but
directly into the household code. The Pauline insistence on the essential unity of the
Church as the Body of Christ is given special emphasis in Eph. 4:2-4, as is Paul’s
repeated teaching that the baptized are God’s children (Eph. 1:5; 5:1), members of
Christ’s body (Eph. 3:6; 4:25; 5:30) who are given Christ’s own nature to “put on” as

14 For a discussion on the various aspects of Paul’s theology, his ecclesiology and his
understanding of baptism, see James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids:

15 In fairness to the author of Colossians, the context for Gal. 3:28 is about who may be admitted
into the Church through baptism. Galatians 3:28 is not a statement on household relationships. As Troy
Martin has observed (“The Covenant of Circumcision [Genesis 17:9-14] and the Situational Antitheses in
Galatians 3:28,” JBL 122 [2003]:111-125), because Gal. 3:26-28 is a summary of Paul’s teaching about
inclusion in the People of God and not, as such, instruction on household conduct, the household codes in
Colossians and the Pastorals are not really in conflict with it. See Chapter Five, n. 85.
their own (4:20-24). Also given special emphasis is the sharp difference between the pre-baptismal state of believers and their new life in Christ (2:1-22; 4:22ff). These themes are woven throughout the epistle and provide a larger context for the household code. Indeed, there are clear allusions to baptism and its effects in Eph. 5:26-27, even as the author takes up and develops Pauline teaching on the Church as Christ’s Body (5:23,29-30) and the baptized as members of that Body (5:30). This is to say that baptism has implications for how Christians are to live with each other in a way which is qualitatively different from the outside culture:

4:15 Faithful to the truth, we must grow up in love in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learned Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. (Eph. 4:15-25, adapted from NRSV)

To be sure, these themes related to Paul’s ecclesiology and theology of baptism—the one Body in Christ, a life lived differently from the dominant culture, the new nature given in baptism—have parallels in Colossians (Col. 1:18,21-24; 2:12-13,19; 3:1-15). The difference with Colossians, however, is that in Ephesians these themes become directly integrated into the household code. The related ecclesiological themes of the Body of Christ (4:16a), caring for the growth and development of Christ’s Body (4:16b), and the
baptized who, as members of Christ’s Body, are likewise members of each other (4:16,25), become taken up again in the marital code: the Church as Christ’s Body (5:23); Christ’s care for his Body as its savior (5:23,29); and the Christian husband and wife who, as members of Christ’s Body (5:30), form “one flesh” (5:31) and become in a more intense way “members of each other” (4:25). The additional theme, found in both Paul and Colossians, of the renewing effects of baptism (Rom. 6:4; Col. 1:21-22; 2:12; 3:1,10) becomes integrated into the marital code in the image of the humble Christ washing his Church-Body-Bride and making her beautiful (5:26-27).

Holding onto these major themes from Paul, the author also takes from Colossians the idea, not found in Paul’s undisputed letters, that Christ is the head of his Church (Col. 1:18; 2:10,19). To this the author adds Paul’s own image of Christ the Bridegroom (2 Cor. 11:2), and from there develops the analogy of Christ/Head/Husband and the Church as Christ’s Body and Bride, making it the centerpiece of the marital code in Eph. 5:21-33. This developed analogy is the author’s own original adaptation of Pauline teaching. The author so shapes this analogy that, set within the larger panorama of the household of God depicted earlier in the letter, it re-describes traditional Greco-Roman ideas about headship, subordination, power, and proper order in the home. While these more traditional ideas are not eliminated, they are re-imagined through the lens of Paul’s theologies of baptism and Church: because of the new nature given to him at baptism, a man’s headship becomes his self-sacrificing, loving care for his wife; subordination becomes mutual service; power becomes blessings lavishly shared; and proper order becomes the willing subordination of all in the household to Christ, their one Lord, whose
breadth and length and height and depth of love (3:18-19; 5:25,29) exalts them all (2:17-20; 5:26-27).

When read against the backdrop of the author’s repeated allusions throughout the epistle to Paul’s teachings on baptism and ecclesiology, the author’s revisions of the household code of Colossians, including the addition of the analogy with Christ and his Church, should be seen as being in continuity with, rather than in opposition to, Paul’s teachings on marriage and gender relations.16 Certainly, Eph. 5:21 has a correspondence, not only to Gal. 5:13, but to Paul’s teachings on conjugal equality in 1 Cor. 7:3-5, his insistence that a wife has “authority” over her husband’s body even as a husband has authority over the body of his wife. The basic difference between Eph. 5:21-33 and Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7 is that the marital code in Ephesians presumes a) a Christian couple (as opposed to marriage to unbelievers in 1 Cor. 7:13-16) and b) that there are no unmarried believers.17 Of course, the author’s intent is to re-work Col. 3:18-19 rather

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16 Contra E. Elizabeth Johnson,”Ephesians,” in Women's Bible Commentary (Louisville, Ky., Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 338-342, see especially 341. Johnson does not take sufficiently into consideration the author’s teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ throughout the epistle and how this image of Church functions both in Eph. 5:21 and the rest of the marital code, including the analogy with Christ and the Church. What is more, while lamenting the subordination of wives in the marital code, she overlooks the author’s additional element regarding a husband’s mutual subordination in a Christian marriage and the author’s carefully nuanced teaching in 5:21 that both husband and wife as members of Christ’s Body owe each other the subordination that Christians owe to Christ. Further, in Johnson’s view, Paul’s earlier freedom in regard to women’s roles in his churches is being limited within Eph. 5:21-33. Johnson disregards, however, the household church in view in Eph. 5:17-21 which includes the women and slaves in Eph. 5:21-6:9. Within the local household church, these women and slaves enjoy relationships of mutual subordination with the male members of the same church who also happen to be their husbands, fathers, and masters.

17 That a Christian couple is in view is clear from Eph. 5:30, “We are members of his Body,” a reference to both husband and wife who, as members of Christ’s Body, are members of the Church. Moreover, nowhere does Ephesians repeat Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7 on the legitimacy or desirability of the unmarried state. By implication, then, marriage appears to be the only viable option in this epistle for Christians.
than to reformulate Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7. But again, unlike Col. 3:18-19, by placing Eph. 5:21 as the introduction to the marital code, the author alludes to Paul’s repeated insistence on conjugal equality in 1 Cor. 7, but in a way which calls to mind Gal. 5:13 and applies it to the marital relationship.

Not only can it be said that the author offers a household code in conformity to Paul’s own teachings but, in some respects, the author goes even further than Paul. While Paul repeatedly insists on conjugal equality in 1 Cor. 7, he never uses the language of mutual subordination—ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ—in application to marriage. This is the author’s own interpretation of Paul’s teaching on marriage. Further, Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 11:3 regarding a man’s headship of a woman is simply presumed without any explanation. The author of Ephesians, by contrast, re-describes a husband’s headship in terms of Christ’s own self-sacrificing and loving care of the Church as “savior of his Body.” To be sure, Paul does state that in Christ “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female” (Gal. 3:28), but his own original context for this statement is about inclusion into the People of God, not marriage, as such, and, even less, household ethics. Nor does Paul discuss anywhere in his letters the obligation of husbands to love their wives. Perhaps he simply just presumes it. The author of Ephesians, on the other hand, not only views this obligation, taken from Col. 3:19, as an important and needed teaching for male Gentile converts, but places repeated emphasis upon it. Furthermore, the author sets this obligation within the context of Christ’s own extreme of love for the Church—his saving

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18 Interestingly, none of the Pauline pseudonymoi promote Paul’s strong endorsement in 1 Cor. 7 of a single lifestyle.
death on her behalf—as the exemplar for the husband. The author does all this in an effort to persuade Gentile Christian men to act against the norms of the dominant culture when adopting their new life in God’s own household. They must now live “no longer as the Gentiles” (4:17). Instead, as head, the Christian *paterfamilias* must generously nurture his family in imitation of the “Father of all from whom every fatherhood (πατριά) . . . takes its name” (3:15). Nor may he, as head of his wife, demand her unilateral subordination. Yes, she must be subordinate to him—wifely subordination is not eliminated—but he, too, must be subordinate to her in his loving care for her, after the pattern of his Lord, the humble Christ who gave himself up as an expression of his deep love and esteem for his Beloved as her Head and “savior of his Body” (5:23). While Paul himself never describes how the members of a Christian household are to “be slaves to each other for the sake of love” (Gal. 5:13), the author revises Col. 3:18-4:1 in such a way that mutual subordination introduces the household code while the example of the humble Christ who takes on the role of a slave in regard to his Church-Bride becomes its dominant image.

The author of Ephesians goes beyond Paul in other ways as well. We saw in the exegetical discussion in Chapter Four how the author’s use of the word “mystery” (1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; 6:19), unlike anything found in Paul or Colossians, has profound implications for the various levels of the cosmos as these were imagined in the author’s time. On the macro-level, the “mystery” concerns the unification of all the elements of the cosmos under the powerful yet loving headship of Christ (1:7-10). On the level of the πολιτεία τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (2:12), the “mystery” refers to the unification of Jews and Gentiles
into one new humanity formed by Christ (2:15). In the marital code, the “mystery” in view is that of the loving union between the Cosmic Christ and his Universal Church-Body-Bride (5:32)—the exact parallel to the mystery described in 1:7-10. This mystery of union with Christ and in Christ on all the different levels of the cosmos has its reflection and counterpart in the loving union of husband and wife, the most basic element of the cosmos. This reflects ancient understandings of the cosmos whereby what happened on the macro-level had its counterpart on the micro-level. More than anything found in Paul or Colossians, the author uses contemporary understandings of cosmology to support and uphold Paul’s own insistence on the relationships of mutual love and service that are to characterize the followers of Christ Jesus.

Considering the ways in which the author of Ephesians goes beyond both Paul’s undisputed letters and Colossians begs the question regarding whether or not the author believes that Colossians is written by Paul.19 In other words, could it be said in any way that the author believes that Col. 3:18-4:1 is Paul’s own teaching which needs revision? Admittedly, despite the different purposes, as discussed above, for the household codes of each epistle, the author rewrites Colossians with a great deal of respect for its content. That is to say that the revisions are careful and nuanced, and without any direct confrontations. They are not the aggressive cuts or deletions characteristic of changes made either to one’s own work or the work of another held in little esteem. On the contrary, the author’s changes consist mostly of additions and re-arrangements of existing material and the careful integration of the original material into the rest of the letter in all

19 This is a separate question from the one that asks if Paul actually wrote Colossians. For reasons regarding the unlikelihood of Paul’s authorship of Colossians, see the discussion in Chapter One, note 73.
the ways noted above. This suggests a certain respect for the text of Colossians, or at least a respect for the writer behind it, even as the author of Ephesians revises it. Would the author, however, revise a letter, or even a portion of a letter, believed to have been written by Paul? The image of Paul in both letters is that of a venerable authority whose suffering “for the sake of the Gentiles” is heroic and admirable (Col. 1:24-25/Eph. 3:1-2). Whereas Colossians, however, borrows elements from Paul’s other letters, notably Philemon, it does not rewrite portions of Paul’s genuine letters, certainly not in the way that Ephesians, as we have observed, revises Col. 3:18-4:1. In fact, because the revisions in Ephesians are written largely in conformity with Paul’s own teachings on gender relations, it is difficult to believe that the author is “revising” Paul in order to have Paul “conform” to his teachings in his undisputed letters. Instead, a more plausible model for the relationship between the two epistles is to see the author of Ephesians as a) writing an epistle modeled after a successfully-written and well-received pseudonymous Pauline epistle (Colossians), b) revising some of the content in this epistle in a careful and respectful way with the purpose of conforming it to the author’s own familiarity with and interpretation of all of Paul’s genuine letters, even as c) the author seeks to provide new Gentile converts with a helpful summary of the traditions inherited from Paul. This implies, of course, differences in the way relationships among the baptized are viewed among Paul’s various inheritors, particularly in regard to those relationships ranked

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20 While Paul’s letters are clearly viewed as authoritative, this need not imply that at this early date they have gained the status of Scripture. See Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Constructions of the Apostle in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 27.

21 The exception here, as noted above, is that, unlike 1 Cor. 7, the author of Ephesians has in view only married Christians, not unmarried, and not Christians with a non-Christian spouse.
according to Greco-Roman categories rather than “in the Lord” where rankings based on ethnicity, social class, or gender are meaningless.

**Ephesians and Later Pauline Tradition**

Considering, then, the ways in which the author not only holds onto Paul’s vision of more horizontal relationships among the baptized but even, in some respects, goes beyond Paul, it is not so much that the author “contradicts” or “betrays” Paul, as some have charged, but that, instead, the author’s teachings, pushing the edges of cultural convention, become blurred when later generations of Christians read Eph. 5:21-33 in the light of the other Pauline *pseudonymoi*. This happens in three distinct yet related ways. The first is when the marital code in Eph. 5:21-33 becomes read, not in its own right, but as an extended support for Col. 3:18-19. This is understandable since both letters claim to be written by Paul. Because both epistles claim Pauline authorship, the entire household code of Eph. 5:21-6:9, not just the marital code in 5:21-33, becomes conflated with Col. 3:18-4:1. Yet, as we saw above, the household code of Colossians is written with an entirely different purpose, namely to affirm and Christianize the traditional role of the *paterfamilias*. The purpose of the household code of Ephesians, instead, is to instruct Gentile Christian converts on the new way of life they are called to live as members of the household of God where the greatest is the one who serves. However, when Eph. 5:21-6:9 becomes read as a support for Col. 3:18-4:1 and conflated with it, the author’s counter-cultural teachings on mutually subordinate relationships among the baptized, particularly with those culturally considered as “inferiors,” i.e., women and slaves, becomes erased.
Evidence that Eph. 5:21-24 especially has been read in light of Col. 3:18 is the way that Eph. 5:22 takes on an imperatival form of ὑποτάσσω in the majority of extant manuscripts. We saw in Chapter Three that there is no agreement among these manuscripts regarding either the form of the verb ὑποτάσσω or its placement. We also saw that the earliest manuscripts are without any verb or participle in v. 22, thereby linking v.22 to v. 21 both grammatically and conceptually. This suggests, along with the rule of lectio difficilior et brevior, lectio potior, that the earliest text of Eph. 5:21-22 is the one without any verb or participle in v. 22 and that the presence of a verb in v. 22 in later manuscripts is an insertion, not part of the original text as composed by the author of Ephesians.

This insertion of a form of ὑποτάσσω in v. 22, directed only at wives, becomes the second way in which later Christian tradition blurs the author’s original teaching. It does not matter which form of the verb is inserted, whether second person or third, whether a present hortatory subjunctive or a passive imperative, or where this new verb is inserted, whether after “wives” or after “husbands.” This insertion, however, has the effect of forming v. 22 as a separate sentence apart from v. 21 so that v. 21 becomes read—wrongfully—even to this day, as a conclusion to the sentence begun in v. 17, even as a conclusion to the instructions given in 5:15ff. When v. 21 is read as a conclusion and not as a transition between the instructions on liturgy in the preceding verses and those on the household which follow, its exhortation to mutually subordinate relationships in the

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22 See note 22, Chapter Three.

23 These would be Π46, which is the earliest surviving collection of Paul’s letters (dated to around 150 CE), the second and third century witnesses Clement 1/2 and Origen, and fourth century manuscripts B, Greek mss acc. to Jerome, Jerome, Theodore. See Chapter Three, note 23.
household is lost. Further, by separating v. 22 from v. 21, the command to wifely subordination stands alone, apart from the exhortation to a husband’s subordination in v. 21. In fact, when v. 21 and v. 22 are read as separate sentences, there is no longer any compelling reason to read v. 21 as an exhortation to a husband’s mutual subordination at all. In other words, with the insertion of a form of the verb ὑποτάσσω in v. 22, the marital code becomes read as beginning with v. 22 and the command to wifely subordination, rather than the command to mutual subordination in v. 21. This has the effect of conforming Eph. 5:22 to Col. 3:18, rather than revising Col. 3:18 into Eph. 5:21-22. The results of this simple change are pervasive and have influenced how the marital code in Ephesians has been read even into our own time: as we saw in Chapter Three, translations both ancient and modern follow later manuscript traditions with an imperatival form of ὑποτάσσω in v. 22, while some scholars today, overlooking the textual problems in this passage and the inconsistencies in what they naïvely accept as the “majority reading,” still insist that the household code begins with v. 22, not v. 21.

Once the marital code becomes shortened from 5:21-33 to 5:22-33, it becomes easier to read it and to interpret it in conformity with the interpolation of 1 Cor. 14:34-35 (discussed in Chapter Five) and the Pastoral Epistles, those additions to the Pauline corpus generally regarded as post-dating Ephesians. Again, just as with Colossians, reading Ephesians in the light of later Pauline pseudonymoi is an understandable error considering that all of these are accepted as coming from the hand of Paul, just as they

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24 See note 21 in Chapter Three.

25 See note 16 in Chapter Two.
all, of course, claim to be. Yet this becomes a third way in which later Christian tradition, albeit unwittingly, not only blurs but renders totally indistinct the author’s original voice and message. Replacing the exhortation to mutual subordination in Eph. 5:21, both in regard to the household church, its celebration of liturgy, and the Christian marital relationship, is the repeated insistence on a wife’s submission to her husband (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; Tit. 2:5) and even her silence in the church (1 Cor. 14:35; 1 Tim. 2:12). The silence imposed on women members of the church goes far beyond the command to wifely subordination in Col. 3:18. In sharp contrast to Paul’s own communities some two generations before the composition of the Pastorals, or the communities in view in Colossians and Ephesians a generation after Paul, where women could serve as prophets (1 Cor. 11), deacons (Rom. 16:1), apostles (Rom. 16:7), and leaders of household churches (Rom. 16:3-4; Phil. 4:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:11; 16:19; Phlm. 2; Col. 4:15), this silence becomes extended even to women’s leadership roles as they are expressly forbidden to teach or to have any authority over a man (1 Tim. 2:12), a clear indication that they did, in fact, have such a role in the primitive Church. Further, replacing the insistence in both Colossians and Ephesians on a husband’s love for his wife (Col. 3:19/Eph. 5:25-33) is the instruction in the Pastorals on the duty of the wife to love her husband and children (Tit. 2:4). And whereas Paul not only encourages unmarried women and widows to remain single, even stating his belief that they will be “happier” that way (1 Cor. 7:8,34,39-40), the Pastorals teach that women are saved only through childbearing and fidelity to their domestic duties (1 Tim. 2:15; Tit. 2:4-5).26

26 In fact, the teaching on young widows in 1 Tim. 5:11-14, and the negative way in which these
Although further discussion on the trajectory from Paul to the Pastoral Epistles is beyond the scope of our investigation, suffice it to say that once all of those works which claim Pauline authorship are collected into a single corpus and read together, the distinctiveness of Eph. 5:21-22 becomes lost as it becomes interpreted in the light of both the other Pauline pseudonymoi and the interpolation of 1 Cor. 14:34-35.  

Behind the repeated discussions on the proper place of women in Pauline literature, particularly in regard to men, is a good amount of tension. That single extended sentence in the original text of Eph. 5:17-24 and the ones which follow in 5:25-33 attest to an early interpretation of Pauline teaching in regard to gender relations, one made by someone who was familiar with, perhaps in a personal way, Paul’s own views on a woman’s place in the Church. These verses also attest, along with the warnings to slave masters in Eph. 6:9, to the author’s tenacious refusal to let go of Paul’s idealism regarding the more horizontal relationships that should characterize all the baptized, regardless of gender or class, whether in the household churches, their liturgies, or in Christian homes where, in the unity they find together in Christ, there is “no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female“ (Gal. 3:28). Of course, all the tension over the proper place and role of women in Pauline Christianity in the decades following Paul’s death is evidence of the variability in the way women’s roles and gender relations are understood at the time, not just within the nascent Church.

young women are described, is in striking contrast to Paul’s teaching on widows in 1 Cor. 7:8-40.

An example from our own day of how the marital code of Ephesians continues to be read in the light of the Pastoral Epistles can be found at http://bible.org/seriespage/church-family-why-male-leadership-family-requires-male-leadership-church. Note, too, how the exhortation to mutual subordination in Eph. 5:21 is eliminated as Eph. 5:22-33 is used to support the blog author’s claim that “men—and not women—are called” to Church leadership.
but in society in general. Paul himself, as we observed above, never really puts in writing specific rules for household behavior, let alone rules of conduct for the women members of his churches, beyond his more general ethical instructions for all. He apparently does not see this as necessary with the approaching eschaton in sight. In that sense, he leaves behind a perceived “vacuum” that his heirs try to work out following his death, beginning with the author of Colossians, then the author of Ephesians, and then, sometime later, those involved with the composition and dissemination of the Pastorals. In composing their codes of household conduct, Paul’s heirs all share one thing in common: they all try to “fill in the gaps” according to how they themselves interpret and read Paul in response to the needs of the churches of their own generation. Their interpretations of Paul, however, are not always in agreement. This becomes clear when the various household codes in the Pauline corpus are compared and contrasted. The author of Ephesians, as we have seen, reads Paul differently from the author of Colossians and thus rewrites the Colossian household code, offering a view of household relationships based on Gal. 3:15-16, rather than on the traditional Greco-Roman hierarchical relationships supported in Col. 3:18-4:1. Yet for the Pastorals, the single command to wifely subordination in Col. 3:18 does not quite go far enough; more instruction must be given “so that the word of God might not be discredited” (Tit. 2:5). Certainly, the fearful tone in the Pastorals is striking as they repeatedly caution their readers to do everything to avoid giving enemies reasons to slander the Christian community’s good name (Tit. 2:8; 1 Tim. 3:7; 5:14; 6:1). Given so much fear, it is no surprise, then, that in conformity with traditional Greco-Roman ideology, 1 Tim. 2:11-12 insists on women’s silence and “full submission.”
At the root of the tension over the proper place of women is the variability in the ways women’s roles were understood and actually lived out from place to place in the Mediterranean world of the primitive Church.28 The same tension and variability in the Pauline corpus over the proper place and role of women is also found in early imperial Roman society; this is most evident in the disparity between contemporary literature and the archaeological record regarding the roles of women. From ancient inscriptions we know that women in the first and early second century enjoyed greater freedom, opportunities for leadership, public roles, and autonomy far beyond anything suggested by contemporary writers.29 In other words, what we see in both Paul’s undisputed letters (see Chapter Five) and Eph. 5:17-22 is something that can be said to resemble in some respects more the archaeological record than the literary one.30 In the same way that a woman like the mid-first century CE Claudia Metrodora of Ephesus is invisible in the

28 This has much to do with how the boundaries between public space (traditionally reserved for men) and private space (reserved for women) are determined locally. See note 29 below.

29 As Richard Saller ("The Family and Society," in Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient History from Inscriptions [ed. John Bodel; London and New York, Routledge, 2001], 95) has observed, “classical literature was written overwhelmingly by elite men for elite men and offers us a view of ancient society that is very limited socially, geographically, and by gender.” Riet van Bremen ("Women and Wealth") explores reasons for the disparity between the archaeological record and what she calls “the traditional ideology regarding women” as it appears in the literature of the time. In regard to Asia Minor in particular, van Bremen notes that it is in the first and early second centuries—when the Greek East is at its wealthiest—that women enjoy public positions in the largest numbers (233). After this time, their prominence begins to wane. In van Bremen’s view, this prominence in the early imperial period is the result of the following factors: a) “the general evolution of the system of ‘euergetism’” at the time, rather than changes in women’s legal status or the “traditional ideology regarding women”; b) a general “disappearance of a clear distinction between private and public life” which “enabled women to move outside their traditionally female sphere into the male world of public life and politics,” even as their behavior in public continues to be “defined and constrained by the same traditional ideology”; c) local differences regarding how public space and private space becomes negotiated as small cities view themselves more as a family unit. In this sense, women’s public benefactions as the “mothers” or “daughters” of the city are seen as an extension of their domestic roles while the city is itself viewed as an extended family (233, 236-237).

30 See note 13 above.
literary record—we would not know of this woman except from archaeology\textsuperscript{31}—Paul’s women co-workers, such as Phoebe, Prisca, or Junia, are equally out of sight in Col. 3:18, 1 Cor. 14:34-35, and the Pastorals. In contrast to Paul’s genuine letters and Eph. 5:21-22, the codes of household conduct in Col. 3:18-4:1, 1 Tim. 2:11-12, Tit. 2:4-5, as well as the interpolation of 1 Cor. 14:34-35, all share a strong correspondence with contemporary literature in which traditional Greco-Roman ideals of the vertically ordered home are held up for emulation with repeated insistence.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

The focus of this investigation on the marital code of Eph. 5:21-33 has been limited to how the author of Ephesians makes use of traditions inherited from Paul, particularly in regard to Pauline teaching on marriage as it is filtered both directly from Paul’s genuine letters and indirectly from Colossians. Much more, however, needs to be explored in order to understand the author’s intended message in composing the marital code. For example, an entirely different way to approach a study of Eph. 5:21-33 would be to examine in greater detail, far beyond what has been offered here, Paul’s teaching on baptism in his undisputed letters and how the author adapts Paul’s baptismal theology to the instructions on relationships in the Christian home. The same could be done in regard to how the author adapts Paul’s ecclesiology to household ethics. Another fruitful approach to the study of the marital code is through an analysis of the author’s cosmology. As a matter of fact, surprisingly little has been done on the cosmology of

\textsuperscript{31} See the discussion on Metrodora in Chapter Five above.
Ephesians and even less on the “cosmological ethics” involved in the epistle. Whose cosmology and whose cosmological ethics are being used—that of traditional Stoicism, the Roman Stoa, another philosophical school, something more eclectic, Paul’s, or perhaps even the author’s own? And how do the cosmological ethics at work in this epistle play out in the household code, particularly the marital code? What are the points of contact or difference with the cosmological ethics discussed in contemporary writers? How does the author’s understanding of the new humanity formed in Christ shape the epistle’s cosmological ethics, particularly as these are applied to the marital relationship? Additionally, more work needs to be done which compares and contrasts all the household codes in the Pauline corpus in order to understand better their points of similarity and differences. A synopsis of these various household codes would be especially useful. Particularly helpful would be a study which investigates a trajectory from Paul to the Deutero-Pauline epistles to the Pastorals in order to understand how household ethics change over time between Paul and his later interpreters. Further research in the areas just noted could add more light onto the differences between Eph.

32 For example, only a few commentators discuss how the language of Ephesians reflects that of ancient descriptions of the dimensions of the universe: Jacques Dupont, "Gnosis: La connaissance religieuse dans les épîtres de saint Paul," (Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis, Dissertationes ad gradum magistri in Facultate Theologica consequendum conscriptae, 1949), 476-489, discussed in Van Kooten, 179-182 (see below); Nils Alstrup Dahl, “Cosmic Dimensions and Religious Knowledge” in Studies in Ephesians (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2000), 365-388; Rainer Schwindt, Das Weltbild des Epheserbriefes: Eine religionsgeschichtlich-exegetische Studie (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2002), 393, 444-447, 466; George H. Van Kooten, Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School: Colossians and Ephesians in the Context of Graeco-Roman Cosmology, with a New Synopsis of the Greek Texts (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 2003), 179-183.

5:21-33 and the other pseudonymous Pauline epistles, placing in clearer focus the opposing sides of the debate in the early Church regarding the proper place and role of women and the variability in which traditions inherited from Paul were received and interpreted.

Ephesians 5:21-33: Closing Considerations

The astute reader will have observed that nowhere in this study is the word “equal” used to describe the relationship of husband and wife as it is depicted in Eph. 5:21-33. Presumed in the epistle is the standard Greco-Roman model of the household in which the male head is the sole possessor of power, a power protected legally by the Roman institution of patria potestas. A father’s power was almost absolute and potestas gave him the right even of life and death, the ius vitae necisque, over his agnatic descendants. Because of all the legal protections of patria potestas, his relationship with his wife would never be “equal,” even when using his power to benefit her, as he is directed to do with great insistence by the author of Ephesians. The author’s challenge to the Christian paterfamilias, then, is not to overturn patria potestas directly—this would be inconceivable for the author’s time. In fact, the inconceivability of overturning patria potestas explains why subordination for a wife is not eliminated from the marital code. Instead, the author instructs the paterfamilias to use his power to transform into a more

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34 While this is true of the Roman paterfamilias, we must remember that by the time of the author, Ephesus had been a major Roman city for some generations. For a discussion on patria potestas, see Jens-Uwe Krause, "Children in the Roman Family and Beyond," in The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World (ed. Michael Peachin; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 629-633. In the same volume, see also Dennis P. Kehoe, "Law and Social Formation in the Roman Empire," 144-163, especially 145-147. See the discussion in Chapter One on Ephesus as the third major Roman metropolis of the Mediterranean (after Rome and Alexandria) and reasons for locating this epistle with the late first century CE Church in Ephesus.
humanizing and horizontal relationship the traditional gender hierarchy which was the universal expectation for the relationship between husband and wife. This the household head must do by acting humbly toward his wife as he provides for her well-being, recognizing that she, like him, is a member of Christ’s own Body. He must therefore give her the same respect he gives to Christ as he subordinates his power to her needs. Mutual subordination of all the family members becomes lived out in mutual service as all in the Christian household put their gifts, given to them by Christ, at each other’s disposal. In the author’s view, with all the family members—the paterfamilias, his wife, children, and slaves—living in humble subordination to each other “in fear of Christ” (5:21), a new and more humanizing interpersonal dynamic develops with the power to transform traditional, hierarchically-ranked relationships. Perhaps most importantly, humanized relationships based on mutual subordination have the power to transform the worldview which requires hierarchical order. In this sense, then, the author attempts to transform the traditional idea of patria potestas by insisting that there is a greater power—that of the Lord Jesus Christ—to which the paterfamilias is subordinate, and there is another household to which the paterfamilias belongs, Christ’s own. In this household, the only legitimate use of power is for service, and the only fitting relationship among God’s sons and daughters is mutual subordination.

Despite the teaching on mutual subordination, given the Greco-Roman model of household still in view, Eph. 5:21-33 does not really speak about equal relationships, at least not as we understand them today. We must admit, however, that the concept of equality has taken centuries to evolve in the Christian West and, indeed, humankind in
general, since this epistle was written. Undeniably, the concept of equality is still in the process of development as the implications for full equality among all persons in both society and the Church, regardless of ethnicity, race, social status, or gender, continue to be worked out on the level of practical application. In other words, when we look at how ideas about equality have needed centuries to evolve, or how we today continue to struggle with issues of gender inequality in both Church and society, it is unfair to impose upon a first century text an ideal from our own time—it has taken all those centuries, millennia even, both for us as a human family and as Church, to learn from the mistakes of the past as we grow and develop in our understanding about what full equality genuinely requires for all human beings. And our understanding of equality, its requirements and implications, continues to evolve even as we evolve as a society, or as Church, or, most broadly, as a global human family.

Is this to say, then, that the marital code of Ephesians has nothing to teach us today? Not at all. Unlike the other codes of conduct found in the Pauline *pseudonymoi*, Ephesians 5:21-33 may rightly be seen as a subtle and carefully nuanced corrective to an androcentric world in which women’s growing freedom is regarded as a threat. By pushing the limits of Greco-Roman propriety, this text insists that, in a truly Christian ethic of marriage, a wife’s subordination requires, even demands, a reciprocal response from her husband. Indeed, the author teaches that subordination must be mutual: it cannot be truly Christian if it is not reciprocal. Unilateral subordination has nothing to do with relationships in Christ’s household. A genuinely Christian marriage must be characterized by mutual service and loving partnership. Should wives, then, be
subordinate to their husbands? Yes, but, as the author insists, their subordination must be
given and received within a relationship of mutual subordination. Anything less
disintegrates into domination and control, not love. In a world which would dehumanize
a woman as a man’s possession, holding her under his control and rule, the author of
Ephesians points to other possibilities for women and men. In that sense, the author still
has something to say to us today, and offers us, too, the possibility for transformation,
presenting us with a challenge and a corrective as imperative for our time as for the
author’s own.
APPENDIX A

A SYNOPSIS OF COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1 AND EPHESIANS 5:21-6:9
Words highlighted in bold are shared by both epistles; synonymous phrases or expressions are underlined; what is in bold italics is shared between the two epistles but placed in a different section of the household code.

**Colossians 3:18-4:1**

18 Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ.

19 Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτὰς.

**Ephesians 5:21-6:9**

21 ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,

22 αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ, ὅτι ἄνηρ ἐστίν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος· ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί.

25 Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς, ἵνα αὐτὴν ἐκτρέφῃ καὶ θάλπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, οὕτως ὁ ἄνδρας ἀγαπᾷ τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα.
20 Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονέωσιν κατὰ πάντα, τοῦτο γὰρ εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν ἐν κυρίῳ.

21 Οἱ πατέρες, μὴ ἐρεθίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἀθυμῶσιν.

22 Οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις, μὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλίᾳ ὡς ἀνθρωποπάρεσκοι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον.  23 ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσετε, ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις.  24 εἰδότες ὃτι ἂπο κυρίου ἀπολύμαισθε τὴν ἀνταπόδοσιν τῆς κληρονομίας, τῷ κυρίῳ Χριστῷ θυσίας.  25 ὃ γὰρ ἂδικόν κομίσεται ὃ ἡδίκησεν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν προσωπολημψία.

269 Εφεσιαν 5:21-6:9 (continued)

6:1 Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῶσιν ὑμῶν [ἐν κυρίῳ]. τοῦτο γὰρ ἔστιν δίκαιον.

6 τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα, ἦτε ἔστιν ἐντολή πρώτη ἐν ἐπαγγελίᾳ, ἵνα εὗ σοι γένηται καὶ ἔστι μακροχρόνιος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

4 Καὶ οἱ πατέρες, μὴ παροργίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν ἐν παιδείᾳ καὶ νουθεσίᾳ κυρίου.

21 Οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις, μὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλίᾳ ὡς ἀνθρωποπάρεσκοι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον.  22 ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσειτε ἐκ ψυχῆς ἐργάζεσθε ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις.  23 εἰδότες ὃτι ἂπο κυρίου ἀπολύμαισθε τὴν ἀνταπόδοσιν τῆς κληρονομίας, τῷ κυρίῳ Χριστῷ θυσίας.  24 ὃ γὰρ ἂδικὸν κομίσεται ὃ ἡδίκησεν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν προσωπολημψία.

4:1 Οἱ κύριοι, τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα τοῖς δούλοις παρέχεσθε, εἰδότες ὃτι καὶ ὁμοίως ἔστε κύριοι ἐν οὐρανῷ.
APPENDIX B

THE STRUCTURE OF EPHESIANS 5:21-33

(BASED ON THE EARLIEST GREEK MANUSCRIPTS)
A 21 ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλους ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,

B 22 οἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ,

(a) 23 ὅτι ἀνήρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς
(b) ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας,
(c) αὐτὸς σωτήρ τοῦ σώματος.

(b') 24 ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ,
(a') οὕτως καὶ οἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί.

C 25 Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας,

(a) καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἤγαπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
(b) καὶ ἐαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς,
(c) 26 ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγάπηση καθαρίσῃ τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὑδάτος ἐν ῥήματι,
27 ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἐαυτῷ ἐνδοξὰ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,
μὴ ἐξουσιάσῃ σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων,
ἀλλὰ ἵνα ἡ ἁγία καὶ ἁμώμος.

(d) 28 οὕτως ὑπείκουσιν ὑμῖν ὁ Χριστὸς ἡ γυναῖκα ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα.

(e') οἱ ἀγαπῶν τὴν ἐαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἐαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ,
29 ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.
(b') ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτὴν,
(a') καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,

(f) 31 ἄντι τούτου καταλείπῃ ἄνθρωπος [τὸν] πατέρα καὶ [τὴν] μητέρα
καὶ προσκολληθῆσαι πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ,
καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.

(e') 32 τὸ μυστήριον τούτο μέγα ὡς ἐστίν:
ἔγω δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

Λ' 33 πλὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς οἱ καθ' ἑνα, ἐκαστὸς τὴν ἐαυτοῦ γυναῖκα οὕτως ἀγαπάτω ὡς ἑαυτὸν,
ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἵνα φοβήται τὸν ἄνδρα.
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VITA

Lisa Marie Belz, O.S.U., was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. She graduated cum laude from Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, Ohio, where she majored in Spanish and Behavioral Sciences. She also holds a M.A. with distinction in Pastoral Ministry from Boston College. Before coming to Loyola University Chicago, she attended the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, where she earned a M.T.S. in Hebrew Bible.

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March 13, 2013  
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