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The Relationship Between Paul's Gospel of 'All One in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28) and the 'Household Codes'

Stephen Motyer

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INTRODUCTION

The problem is easily defined. The statement that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female' (Gal 3:28) sits very awkwardly beside the household codes of Colossians 3:18-4:1, Ephesians 5:22-6:9, and 1 Peter 2:18-3:7,¹ with their insistence that wives should submit to their husbands, and slaves to their masters. It looks uncomfortably like the unspoken revoking of the party manifesto after the election, when it is discovered that the promises made were just too bold to fit the realities of life. But even this analogy is too kind: for the *Haustafeln* (to give them their convenient German name) do not apologize in any way, but urge this submission and obedience as the outworking of Christian discipleship 'in the Lord'² so that apparently the same ethical foundation ('in Jesus Christ', 'in the Lord') is given for two diametrically opposed views of social relationships.

This judgement is, of course, too hasty. It is immediately possible to respond that Paul never intended in Galatians 3:28 to deny the *existence* of the distinctions listed, merely their *significance*. Along these lines Rengstorf has argued that the *Haustafeln*, far from contradicting this basic gospel statement, are in fact its logical outworking. For him, the significance of *ὑποτάσσεσθαι* is limited to the area of parenthood, where it is appropriate that the wife (*qua* mother) should submit to her husband (*qua* father), because in the conception of children the husband reflects the creative activity of God. But in so far as she relates to him just *as a man*, she is his equal. Rengstorf leaves the master-slave relationship untouched, and his argument looks very much like special pleading—Ephesians 5:22 mentions no such dramatic qualification—but nonetheless, following Rengstorf's lead, we could argue that the whole point of the *Haustafeln* is the presentation of the household as a harmonious unity, with each part fulfilling its role within the whole as an expression of a common bond to Christ which transcends all differences.³ We could even say that the

¹ We limit our consideration to these three, in which the literary form appears most clearly. 'Household Codes' have also been found in 1 Tim 2:8-3:13, 5:1-6:2; Tit 2:210, and even (by K H Rengstorf, 'Die neutestamentlichen Mahnungen an die Frau, sich dem Marine unterzuordnen', in W Foerster (ed), *Verbum Dei Manet in Aeternum: Festschrift O Schmitz* (Wittenberg 1953) 133) in 1 John 2:12-14, as well as at several points in the Apostolic Fathers (Didache 4:9-11; Barnabas 19:5-7; 1 Clement 21:6-9; Polycarp, Phil 4:2-6:3; Ignatius to Polycarp 5:1-2: references from M Dibelius, *An die Kolosser Epheser an Philemon* (Tübingen 1953) 48). But these later examples show deviations of both form and content over against the three basic passages (form: the exhortation becomes more discursive, the neat reciprocity vanishes; content: interest is no longer restricted to the 'household', but is now mainly devoted to the church), and for this reason, simply to make the task a little simpler, we leave them out of account. The problem of diversity which the basic passages pose is quite difficult enough. Because the point of comparison is Pauline, we will concern ourselves more with Eph and Col than with 1 Pet.

² Col 3:18, 20; Eph 6:1; cf *ὡς ἐν κυρίῳ* in Eph 5:22, 6:5, Col 3:23.

³ Underlying Rengstorf's rather extraordinary view is a concern with the *οἶκος* as the object of Christian mission (136f, 139). He writes that we do not find a whole new conception of the *οἶκος* in the *Haustafeln*, but 'wohl... ist neu die Art and Weise, wie hier die zeitgenössische Lebensform des *οἶκος* in seiner Ganzheit and unter

Haustafeln present the Monday—to Saturday expression of a basic principle of unity which finds its fullest earthly expression in the common Sunday worship—perhaps conducted in the same οἶκος.⁴

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There is probably truth in such statements; but on their own they represent an oversimplification which ignores real difficulties. For Paul, the distinction between Jew and Greek really was abolished through the gospel, and he fought with great determination against any reemergence of it, in religious or social life. But plainly the distinction between 'slave and free' was not abolished in the same way, even though this was an available social option taken up by some religious groups.⁵ Paul does not suggest that Philemon ought to set Onesimus free because he is a brother in Christ, though he objects strongly to Peter's unwillingness to abandon the Jewish food-laws in Galatians 2:12ff. So it is not possible to maintain that Galatians 3:28 is *not* a programme of social reform—because in one of the three areas mentioned it plainly was so understood. Why not, then, in the other two?⁶

The difficulties multiply further. In the 1 Peter Haustafel only slaves, wives and husbands are addressed; children, parents and masters are not mentioned. It is hard to maintain that this Haustafel is addressed to the οἶκος as a socio-religious unit! Rather, it looks as if, in all the Haustafeln, the emphasis falls on the differentiated address to each 'sort' of person, and not on the οἶκος as a whole. This is certainly Paul's method in 1 Corinthians 7:16-24, a passage widely regarded as parallel to the Haustafeln. Once this view is taken, however, Rengstorf's link with Galatians 3:28 is broken.

And further: it is now universally recognized, following the work of Dibelius and especially of his pupil Weidinger, that the Haustafeln are close cousins to a tradition of ethical instruction widely found in the Hellenistic and Hellenistic-Jewish world. It is found, for instance, in the Stoic Epictetus, who gives advice to an imaginary pupil who asks him how it would be fitting for him to behave, as a pious, wise and caring person, towards the gods, his parents, his brothers, his country and strangers (Diss 11:17:31). Seneca also urges his reader to think about the behaviour appropriate to his particular position in life, and recommends philosophy, 'which gives to each person that which is appropriate to him, and does not lump all men together but persuades the husband of the right behaviour towards his wife, the father of the right way to bring up his children, the master of the right way to rule his slaves' (Epist 94:1). Philo, though he was no Stoic, yet adopts the Stoic concept of τὸ καθήκον, and makes frequent use of a similar list-form of ethical duties. One small example will suffice: in

gleichmässiger Beachtung aller seiner Glieder and ihres gegenseitigen Verhältnisses in das Licht des christlichen Offenbarungsglaubens gerackt and von ihm her normiert wird' (139). Because of this, the Haustafeln may be conceived of as 'angewandtes Kerygma' (141 n 24).

⁴ Rengstorf, *Verbum Dei*, 139f finds it highly relevant that the New Testament church is presented as a κοινὸν ἐκκλησία (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5; Col 4:15; Phm 2; Acts 2:46, 5:42). This means 'dass es sich für Paulus in dem Satz Gal 3, 28 tatsächlich um die Grundregel für das Leben der Gemeinde and nicht bloss um eine Theorie handelt' (140f).

⁵ J Gnlika, 'Exkurs 3: Die Haustafeln', *Der Kolosserbrief* (Freiburg 1980) 215: in Judaism a slave of foreign origin was set free, if he adopted the Jewish religion; and certain Gnostic and mystery-religion groups abandoned all distinctions between slaves and masters.

⁶ Cf E & F Stagg, *Woman in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia 1978) 164f: they discern a qualification of the acceptance of slavery in Philemon, and try as hard as they can to minimize Paul's problem, but yet conclude, 'measured by his own vision in Gal 3:28, much remained to be done in closing the gap between ideal and practice' (165).

expounding the fifth commandment, Philo finds ethical instruction there for 'old and young, rulers and ruled, benefactors and the objects of their care, slaves and masters', as well as for parents and children, and these duties he then outlines in a reciprocal manner very reminiscent of the New Testament Haustafeln (De Decal 165-167). Recently Thraede has argued that a further area of background is to be found in the so-called 'Oikonomia'

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tradition, which had a long pedigree by New Testament times and sought to give practical advice on the running of the household.⁷

Scholars disagree greatly over the assessment of the relationship between these traditions and the Haustafeln, as we shall see, but all agree that a relationship of some sort exists; and this immediately suggests that the Haustafeln represent the adoption into New Testament ethics of foreign elements which have no foundation in the basic ethical impulses of the New Testament itself. When we bear in mind the tension within the New Testament as well, the case seems irrefutable.

Many varied attempts to approach this difficulty are available in the market of New Testament scholarship. A survey of the options on offer will help us to decide where to put our money.

SOME SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

The 'Delay in the Parousia' Theory

The scholars who first pointed out the link between the Haustafeln and contemporary ethics, Dibelius and Weidinger, proposed that the earliest Christian congregations, committed to an ecstatic form of religion and a belief in the imminent End, had no place for practical ethical instruction at all, for all problems would very soon be solved. But as the End did not come, and as the practical problems of life in society did not go away, it became necessary to develop an ethical tradition out of an ecstatic—and here it was very useful to be able to use material already to hand, albeit of pagan origin, which could be 'christianized' simply by the addition of the little phrase 'in the Lord'⁸. Weidinger is clear that such an addition by no means leaves the content of the admonition unaltered;⁹ but at the same time it remains an admonition drawn from a foreign source, and adopted into Christianity only because the original 'complete solution of the family and slave problem' through the Spirit, outlined in Galatians 3:28, was no longer found to work.¹⁰

⁷ The fullest survey of the more usually emphasized background in Hellenism and Hellenistic Judaism is to be found in J E Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel* (Göttingen 1972). Shorter surveys are conducted by E Lohse, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser and an Philemon* (Göttingen 1968), W Schrage, 'Zur Ethic der neutestamentlichen Haustafeln', *New Testament Studies* 21 (1975) 1-22 and J Gnlika, *Kolosserbrief*.

⁸ M Dibelius, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur II: Apostolisches and Nachapostolisches* (Berlin 1926) 67f; idem, *Kolosser*, 48. K Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln: Ein Snick urchristlicher Paranes* (Leipzig 1928) 74.

⁹ 'Zwischen wohlgefällig = "gern gesehen" and "wohigefällig in dem Herrn" liegt ein gewaltiger Unterschied'. After further 'Verchristlichung' by the addition of scriptural quotations and other Christian sentiments, 'Von der idealen Vershwommenheit and Allgemeinheit der Stoa, wo alles Aussere für gleichgaltig erklart wird und von der persönlichen Korrektheit alles Glück erwartet wird, ist kaum noch etwas zu spüren' (75).

¹⁰ Weidinger, *Haustafeln*, 7. Gnlika, *Kolosserbrief*, 215 also accepts that the delayed parousia was formative.¹¹

The 'Degeneration' Theory

This heading is used to group together the work of three scholars who, in different ways, maintain that the Haustafeln display a degeneration from an original purity. Drane does not, so far as I am aware, mention the Haustafeln either in his book on Pauline ethics or in his related article in *Novum Testamentum*,¹¹ but it is easy to see what his judgement about them would be. The starting-point of his assessment is, he says, the view that we must distinguish between 'apostolic' New Testament writings (in which law was abandoned and behaviour was 'pneumatic' and thus 'truly "Christian"') and 'early Catholic' New Testament

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writings, in which law was reintroduced and 'a well-defined code of behaviour carefully surrounded by moral rules' was produced ('Tradition', 167). Further, the beginnings of the move from the one to the other can already be discerned in 'the early and genuine Pauline epistles' (*loc cit*). In Drane's understanding the process which, according to Weidinger, took place in the church as a whole, can be traced in Paul's own wrestling with the problems he faced. But Drane adds a value judgement according to which the later developments represent a sacrifice of Christian freedom (cf 'Tradition', 174, 177).

Sanders sees an analogous process of degeneration taking place, but understands differently the centre from which Colossians and Ephesians degenerate. For him the real achievement of Pauline ethics is the eschatological conception of ἀγάπη, a moral impulse derived from the imminent expectation of righteousness.¹² But in Colossians and Ephesians the eschatology has changed, so that the dialectic is no longer between present and future, but between earth and heaven, in both of which the Christian is resident. Because his existence in heaven is assured, there is no foundation for the demand to bring one's earthly existence into line with one's heavenly. For this reason 'the Haustafeln must... be seen as completely worthless for Christian ethics', because they propose essentially worldly values in a vain attempt to make the Christian distinctive in the world (*Ethics*, 75).

Schweizer, on the other hand, finds the degeneration within the Haustafeln themselves. In the Colossian Haustafel, he argues, we encounter a robust 'worldliness' which, like the ethic of the Old Testament, builds upon the fact of creation to require a personal obedience to the Creator Lord in the context of what he has made. There is no appeal to a 'world order' (*Weltordnung*) within which the Christian must take up his allotted position. But in Ephesians and 1 Peter such an appeal begins to appear,¹³ and this in fact is the start of a process of 'paganization', which increasingly emphasizes the necessity of the lower orders to submit, and which reaches its climax in the Haustafeln of the post apostolic period, where essentially Stoic appeals to the world order are brought in to reinforce a paternalistic church hierarchy, and personal obedience to the Lord has faded completely from view ('Exkurs', 162f;

¹¹ J W Drane, *Paul: Libertine or Legalist? A Study in the Theology of the Major Pauline Epistles* (London 1975); idem, 'Tradition, Law and Ethics in Pauline Theology', *Novum Testamentum* 16 (1974)167-178.

¹² J T Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament: Change and Development* (Philadelphia 1975) eg 56.

¹³ The emphasis on the man in Eph 5:22-33 suggests the underlying thought of a hierarchy ('Excurs: Die Haustafeln', *Der Brief an die Kolosser* (Neukirchen/Vluyn 1976) 163; 'Die Weltlichkeit des Neuen Testaments: die Haustafeln', in H Donner, R Hanhart and R Smend (eds) *Beiträge zur Alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift W Zimmerli* (Göttingen 1977) 408. There is no address to masters to match that to slaves in 1 Pet 2:18-25 ('Exkurs', 162), and what is said to the slaves there could lead them to believe that service to the 'higher class' is identical with service to God ('Weltlichkeit', 409f)—etc.

'Weltlichkeit', 410-412). The Colossian Haustafel is therefore, for Schweizer, in harmony with Galatians 3:28, which is repeated in Colossians 3:11 and lies behind the exhortation to mutual service in Colossians 3:16 ('Weltlichkeit', 405); and as a result 'one will prefer the healthy, unpretentious worldliness of the first Haustafel in Colossians 3:18-4:1, as an altogether authentic Christian statement, to the developed scheme of the later period' ('Weltlichkeit', 413).

The essential difference between these three scholars is their differing

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assessment of the ethical centre in Pauline theology. For Drane it is the immediate presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit; for Sanders the imminent expectation of the End; for Schweizer the unity of creation and redemption.¹⁴ Our own answer to the question before us will be likewise determined by our conception of Paul's ethical power-centre.

The 'counter-action' theory

Under this heading we group suggestions which have in common the view that the Haustafeln were designed to counteract an aberration of some sort. Some scholars connect them specifically with Galatians 3:28 in this respect: this verse is held to have produced or been used by an emancipationist movement, which sought total equality for women and slaves. The Haustafeln were intended to correct the balance (and therefore may be forgiven for perhaps over-stating the case in favour of authoritarianism).¹⁵ Much can be said in support of this view (see especially Crouch), but it encounters the difficulty of Colossians 3:11 where, with the exception of 'neither male nor female', the apparently socially explosive list of Galatians 3:28 is repeated, and that within spitting distance of the Haustafel. No sense of incompatibility was felt at the time. Variations of this theory are represented by Gnlika (216),¹⁶ Lohmeyer (155) and Scott (78).¹⁷

The 'link with Jesus' theory of L Goppelt

Goppelt plays down the link between the Haustafeln and parallels outside the New Testament, arguing that Dibelius and Weidinger greatly underestimated the originality of the Haustafeln. They are Christian through and through, but the extent of their originality can only properly be seen when they are set in the context of the development of the paraenetic tradition which began with Jesus himself. Two streams of tradition must be distinguished—the 'synoptic', which sought to remember (and eventually record) Jesus' life and teaching in their own *Sitz im Leben*, and the 'paraenetic', which developed Jesus' ethical teaching by applying it

¹⁴ Cf Schweizer, 'Weltlichkeit', 406: 'So wird darin sichtbar, worauf schon die Schöpfung der Ehe and Familie hinzielt and was "neue Schöpfung" bedeutet'.

¹⁵ This general view is supported by Crouch, *Colossian Haustafeln*, 120-145; Schroeder, 'Exkurs', 85-91; W Lillie 'The Pauline House-tables', *Expository Times* 86 (1975) 179183; Schweizer, 'Weltlichkeit', 405; Schrage, 'Ethik', 5; contra, K Thraede, 'Zum historischen Hintergrund der "Haustafeln" des NT', in E Dassmann and K S Frank (eds) *Pietas: Festschrift B. Köttling* (Münster 1980) 361 n 10.

¹⁶ The Colossian Haustafel was intended to reinforce the demands of every-day life against the ascetic and world-denying tendencies of the Colossian heresy.

¹⁷ Lohmeyer and Scott both suggest that the question of slavery was a matter of moment in Colossae, perhaps because of Onesimus. Hence the special emphasis on 'slaves' in the Haustafel. (E Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon* (Göttingen 1956); E F Scott, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians* (London 1930)).

carefully to new situations in the life of the church. Goppelt seeks to show how the *Haustafeln* may be placed within the 'paraenetic' stream, by a brief consideration of Jesus' teaching on marriage and secular authority. His suggestion has not met with acceptance, because he was not able to show that this is indeed how tradition worked in the early church;¹⁸ and from our point of view he is not very helpful, because we must then simply accept that Jesus' ethical initiative was developed in two directions, the one emphasizing a new freedom and equality, the other an acceptance of worldly structures, and so the tension between the two is simply pushed back into Jesus'

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teaching—if, as Goppelt (105) insists, the 'paraenetic' development is to be regarded as 'a working-over of the Jesus-tradition in accordance with its intention'.¹⁹

The 'Deuteronomistic' theory of E Lohmeyer

Lohmeyer proposed that the Old Testament and Judaism were the essential background. Pauline theology contains no radical rejection of the Old Testament law, he argued, although it does rest upon a break with Israel, the people of the law. This created a situation in which Paul had to recast the demands of the law for his Gentile converts without connecting them to Judaism. In doing so he was able to draw upon an ethical 'form' used by Jewish missionaries in the Greek world to express the duties required by the law toward the three less privileged groups of women, children and slaves, who, he maintains, are connected in Jewish tradition from Deuteronomy onwards as the necessary recipients of special care. This fascinating suggestion has not been taken up, because Lohmeyer did not provide proof of the traditional connection of these three groups in the Old Testament or in Judaism.

The 'Christological' theory

In this final category we group the work of three scholars who are united in finding in Christology the basis for an integration of the *Haustafeln* into Pauline theology: Kähler, Wendland and Schrage. For all three the *Haustafeln* are an attempt to work out in practice the gospel of the Exalted Christ. Kähler argues that ὑποτάσσεσθαι, wherever it appears in the New Testament, should be interpreted against the background of its use in 1 Corinthians 15:28 to express Christ's free decision to acknowledge his father on the basis of his knowledge of God's order of things. It always connotes, therefore, an established *Ordnung* to which we are invited to submit ourselves, following the example of Christ. The parallel between the marriage relationship and that between Christ and the church in the Ephesian *Haustafel* shows what sort of submission to the *Ordnung* is required: one that implies mutual dedication to service, rather than acknowledgement of a hierarchy.²⁰ Wendland (37) and

¹⁸ His view is, however, taken up to some extent by his pupil David Schroeder in his thesis (see especially D Schroeder, *Die Haustafeln des Neuen Testaments: Ihre Herkunft and ihr theologischer Sinn*, Hamburg Dissertation 1959).

¹⁹ The development of the tradition then simply reveals an underlying inconsistency between Jesus' affirmation of worldly authority (taxes to Caesar) and his flouting of authoritative traditions (especially, here, acceptance of women as equals, and association with outcasts).

²⁰ See especially E Kähler, 'Zur "Unterordnung" der Frau im Neuen Testament: Der neutestamentliche Begriff der Unterordnung and seine Bedeutung für die Begegnung von Mann and Frau', *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik* 3 (1959) 9-10. E Kamlah, "ΥΠΟΤΑΣΣΕΘΑΙ in den neutestamentlichen "Haustafeln"', in O Böcher and K Haacker (eds) *Verborum Veritas: Festschrift G. Stählin* (Wuppertal 1970) defines ὑποτάσσεσθαι similarly (it

Schrage (19-21) both resist the idea of an *Ordnung* to which submission is required,²¹ but share the same basic impulse. For Wendland, adoption of current moral ideas was not a denial of the lordship of Christ, but an expression of it. He is the Lord behind the social structures, but his authority also stands over against that of earthly structures—so that the love of Christ forms a *radical new* basis for obedience *in* the world, not out of it (35-38). This combination of acceptance and radical critique is linked to a perception of the 'eschatological limits' of societal structures (45). 'Submission' is com-

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pletely redefined by Christ's love (39f), and the *Haustafeln* represent the real spirit of the 'law of Christ' of Galatians 6:2 (41). *Schrage's* longer article seeks to establish essentially the same position with more exegetical detail, adding the suggestion about the adoption of Stoic 'layered deity' (see above, note 21), and not taking up Wendland's point about the importance of eschatology for the right understanding of the *Haustafeln*.²²

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is hard not to experience a sinking feeling as we turn to our own assessment of the problem. As so often in New Testament scholarship, it is hard to imagine a broader spread of opinion. On the one wing stands Thraede, who cynically argues (366) that the church simply copied many a contemporary politician and called divine powers down as sanctions for secularly-conceived authority,²³ on the other wing stands Wendland, who insists that the contemporary ethic was transformed by the gospel. It is interesting to note the appearance over 30 years ago of a British mediator between these positions—this is so often the role played by British scholarship—in the person of Selwyn, who argues rather unconvincingly that three 'levels' of theological substance may be discerned in the *Haustafeln*:²⁴ the sublime theological reflection of Peter and Paul on marriage and the nature of service arises directly out of gospel truth; the less sublime teaching about the state and about the effect of good conduct on Gentiles is also basically Christian; but at the bottom level of 'the fundamental principles inculcated' (438) there is nothing specifically Christian except *ἐν κυρίῳ*, which could well be a gloss added to an originally pagan or Jewish code. Rather than simply seek to mediate and reconcile, however, it would be better to ask if it is possible to define the method proper to a study of this sort, because it is plain that unspoken methodological presuppositions to a large extent

is 'Demut', 240; 'Verzicht auf Selbstdurchführung', 243), but does not attempt to discover theological or other reasons for this remarkable transformation of meaning over against that in common use.

²¹ H-D Wendland, 'Zur soziaethischen Bedeutung der neutestamentlichen *Haustafeln*', in O Michel and U Mann (eds) *Die Leibhaftigkeit des Wortes: Festschrift A Köberle* (Hamburg, 1958) 34-46. Schweizer saw the gradual appearance of *Weltordnung* thinking as a process of 'paganization' at work in the *Haustafeln* (see above); Schrage, on the other hand, finds no radical distinction of this kind between the NT *Haustafeln* and their post-NT counterparts: both evidence the simultaneous adoption and transformation of the Stoic idea of 'abgestufte Gottheit' ('Ethik', 16), which meant that the authority of parents, husbands and earthly rulers was thought of as derived from their likeness to God. But conformity to Christ was personally conceived, argues Schrage, and abandoned the Stoic world-order idea.

²² Schrage in fact holds that the eschatological perspective has significantly changed in Col and Eph as against the major Paulines (9f): the End no longer puts the present in question (10), and as a result the *Haustafeln* affirm marriage in a way in which Paul did not in 1 Cor 7 (10 n 1).

²³ He lays emphasis on the validation of episcopal authority in the later *Haustafeln*. His comment here, 'dass "Ideologic" allein Amter hervorgebracht hat, ist in diesem Fall nur schwer vorstellbar' (366), implies that in the NT, too, the formative forces were social rather than theological.

²⁴ E G Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St Peter* (London 1942) 437f.

determine the variety of assessments we have surveyed. The following three methodological considerations, which deserve far fuller treatment than they can receive here, seem to me to be vital.²⁵

The importance of correct traditional framing

All authors, including biblical ones, stand in a tradition. The better they are, the more conscious they are of the tradition which has shaped both them and their literary products. But if they are good, they will not be concerned solely to pass on their tradition, but to add their own development—that is, they will interact with the tradition in a dialectical way. The discernment of that interaction is the essential goal of later interpretation, for only so can the processes actually working in the author's mind, whether consciously or unconsciously, be illuminated.

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This is naturally very difficult, so the interpreter should take assiduous care over his preliminary working hypothesis of the traditional 'frame' in which his author stands. If he gets that wrong, his author will not recognize the picture of himself which emerges, however satisfied the interpreter may feel! The situation is very complicated as far as Paul is concerned, but it does seem clear that the general 'frame' within which he stands is the Old Testament and Judaism, and the 'frame' of the *Haustafeln*, whatever one believes about the authorship of Colossians and Ephesians, is Paul. This general presupposition would not exclude influences from outside the 'frame'—far from it—but it would exclude approaches like that of Thraede, which lays more emphasis on proposed Romano-Greek influences, and would give methodological support to approaches like that of Lohmeyer, which finds in the *Haustafeln* an interaction not just with Judaism but also with the Old Testament. Only if interpretation within this 'frame' proves impossible should another be sought.

The primacy of exegesis over generalized word-definitions

James Barr's insistence that words are defined by the sentences in which they occur needs to be paid very careful heed in a study of this sort. Crouch, for instance, supports the assertion that 'the addition of ἐν κυρίῳ does not change the content of ethical exhortations.... The standards of the social order... remain unchanged in their essence'²⁶ with the statement, "ὑποτάσσεσθαι remains, eg, ὑποτάσσεσθαι"²⁷. This is the error which Barr dubs 'illegitimate totality transfer': it is an appeal to a lexicographical definition which is felt to transcend the use of the word in particular contexts. With this tool in his interpreter's hand, it is difficult for an author to prove that he has something new to say, unless he invents new words to say it. But that is only rarely possible, if he is to communicate. In the light of this consideration, the approach of Kähler, Wendland and Schrage must be judged methodologically superior.

²⁵ The discerning reader will spot that the following points owe much to contemporary discussion about hermeneutics, especially the works of J Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford 1961), E McKnight, *Meaning in Texts: The Historical Shaping of a Narrative Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia 1978) and A C Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Exeter 1980).

²⁶ Barr, *Semantics*, 154.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 155.

The community of language and culture

This third methodological principle tends to qualify the first two. Barr also criticized the 'Biblical Theology' movement for separating thought from language, and thus regarding biblical thought as a culture apart from the world in which it was set and with which it shared its language. Barr argued that the wider context within which the biblical authors use words—possibly distinctively—is the language-group of which they are a part. They cannot be interpreted in isolation from this group. It must be borne in mind, therefore, that the *Haustafeln* went out into a secular culture which had already shaped the minds of their readers, even though converted to Christ.

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This sort of consideration makes a comparative study of this sort exceedingly complex and subtle, but in relation to the above survey of research it puts a question-mark, for instance, against the frequent assertion that the *Haustafeln* do not believe in a *Weltordnung* in harmony with which their readers must live.²⁸ It looks as though this assertion rests upon a belief in the uniqueness of biblical theism, which is held to stand over against contemporary culture and replace *Weltordnung* thinking with an emphasis on personal obedience to the creator. Whether or not the Bible thinks of creation in this way (and it is disputed by Kähler), *this distinction would have been unthinkable for the ancient mind*. The original readers of the *Haustafeln* would naturally have seen the hand of the creator precisely in the ordered harmony of the world—and nothing is said to prevent them from following their inclination. It is hard to find historically compelling Schweizer's distinction between acceptance of structures 'as simply present in the world'²⁹ out of obedience to the creator (which is good), and belief in a structured *Weltordnung* into which one must fit in obedience to the same creator (which is bad).

TOWARDS A SOLUTION

On the basis of these orientating methodological considerations we may now proceed to our own constructive exegetical endeavour, which we will divide under the three headings *Acceptance*, *Transformation*, and *Overthrow*.

Acceptance

The parallel between the *Haustafeln* and 1 Corinthians 7:16-24, Romans 13:1-7 is widely recognized.³⁰ In spite of the difficulties of interpretation presented by these texts, it seems clear that the acceptance of worldly order which they teach—whether it is that of the state (Romans), or the personal 'order' by which each individual finds his life defined (1 Corinthians)—is based upon the fact of creation. The 'powers that be' are 'ordained' (τεταγμένα) by God—that is, set in rank and given their marching orders; those who resist them are therefore resisting his διαταγή (Rom 13:1-2). Similarly each person should conduct his life (περιπατέω) in accordance with the lot which fell to him at the Lord's share-out (ὡς

²⁸ So, eg, Schweizer, Schrage, Wendland (qualified); contra, Kähler, Schroeder (eg 182).

²⁹ *Weltlichkeit*, 404.

³⁰ Eg by Schroeder, 81, 89-91; Goppelt, 95; Schrage, 10; Wendland, 38f. The parallel is recognized but qualified by Dibelius, *Kolosser* 48; Gnlika, *Kolosserbrief*, 215: but their qualification is based upon a presupposed change of eschatological perspective which, as we shall argue, receives scant support in the texts themselves.

ἐμέρισεν ὁ κύριος—1 Cor 7:17).³¹ Within the biblical tradition, Paul is working with a concept of creation which saw in everything the hand of the creator. This is the theological basis for the acceptance of societal structures in the Haustafeln. The fact that there is no specific appeal to creation or the creator is not significant (contra Schrage 21): the overall 'frame' provides it clearly.

But—and this has not been clearly seen—'creation' is also the

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theological basis for the acceptance of pagan morals which the Haustafeln evince. Just as General Booth justified the Salvation Army's rousing unconventional singing with 'Why should the Devil have all the best tunes?', so the early church was quite prepared to recognise the good to be found in the world around.³² Paul can appeal to self-evident moral truths, as in Philippians 4:8 ('Whatsoever things are true...', quoted by Lohse, *Kolosser*, 222 in this context), and even, like Philo, use the Stoic concept of τὸ καθήκον (eg Rom 1:28, Phm 8; cf 1 Cor 11:13). So the very exhortation to acceptance of societal institutions is, by the manner of its formulation, an example of that acceptance in action.

Transformation

But the acceptance is qualified. It is universally recognized that there is no precise parallel to the Haustafel form as it appears in Colossians and Ephesians, with its neat reciprocal pairs, and its 'Address—Admonition—Reason' structure. There are forebears, but plainly some particular midwife was at work to bring this distinctively Christian offspring to birth. Schroeder's analysis of the form leads him to make the convincing suggestion that the form in which the law was promulgated and reinforced in the Old Testament has influenced the Haustafeln.³³ The fifth commandment, quoted in the Ephesian Haustafel (6:2), has precisely the same shape as the Haustafel instructions themselves.³⁴ The likelihood of Old Testament influence on the form is increased by observation of the extent to which the Old Testament has influenced the content (notably in the instruction to fathers). There must, however, have been some precise stimulus for the production of these instructions under Old Testament influence—and the best answer is probably the simplest, that it was just the mixed nature of the congregations, and the desire to provide help for each, which stimulated Paul or someone else to compose them.

But the distinctively Christian form encourages us to ask if the content is distinctively Christian also; and here it seems impossible to resist the conclusion that the repeated ἐν

³¹ Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of I Corinthians 7:2* (Missoula 1973) 183, understands 'faith' as the object of ἐμέρισεν and asserts (174 n 571) 'Paul... never connected (slavery) with the orders of creation or the will of God'. The context, however, seems to demand that the 'sharing-out' concerns one's position in society. But it would be wrong to infer (as Lillie, *ET* (1975) does) that therefore, for Paul, societal institutions were baptised with inviolability. Bartchy is surely right to oppose the 'use slavery' interpretation of 1 Cor 7:21.

³² Schrage *NTS* (1975) 10 speaks of the exercise of the 'libertas christiana' in this connection. What is it, however, which secures for the Christian the freedom to adopt a pagan ethic? Theologically, it must be his belief in the creator.

³³ Haustafeln, 91-108. He is supported by Gnlika, *Kolosserbrief*, 214.

³⁴ In notes 55-57 *ad loc* Schroeder gives as OT examples of this form of 'apodiktisches Recht' Deut 16:21-17:1; 22:5; 23:7-8; Lev 17:10-11; Amos 5:4, 15; Prov 3:1-2, 11-12, 21-22, 4:1-2, 20-22.

κυρίῳ and ὡς ἐν κυρίῳ, and the extended reflections on the Christian understanding of marriage (Eph 5:25-33) and of service (Eph 6:5-8, Col 3:22-25, 1 Pet 2:18-25) point not just to a Christian appropriation of, but also transformation of, ‘normal’ household ethics. This judgement of course depends partly upon one’s assessment of what the secular ‘norm’ was: and Thraede³⁵ is probably right that in the first century a complete spread of opinion, from hard-line conservatism to full egalitarianism, was represented, and that the *Haustafeln* can be understood as adopting a position in relation to the debate between these fronts. But if, in accordance with our

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method, we start with the New Testament text and work outwards, we must affirm with Schroeder³⁶ that ἐν κυρίῳ should be interpreted in the light of ἐν χριστῷ in Paul, and that with this phrase the *Haustafeln* are linked to the central movements of Pauline theology.

ἐν κυρίῳ is the clue to the right understanding of the much-controverted ὑποτάσσεσθαι which, with ὑπακούειν, forms the central demand of the *Haustafeln*. Ephesians 5:22 introduces the *Haustafel* by requiring the mutual ‘submission’ of all who live ‘in the fear of Christ’, and in the exposition of the incarnation, to which the husband-wife exhortation is bound, we discover what this submission means. It is the submission of service, displayed by Christ in leaving his father for the sake of the church (thus providing a model for the husband, who likewise leaves his parental home for his wife), and displayed by the church in enjoying and preserving the unity with Christ which resulted from his self-giving (thus providing a model for the wife, who must likewise ‘fear her husband’ (5:33)—ie work with joy and care at the flowering of the relationship to the constraints of which she voluntarily committed herself when she got married, just as when she became a Christian she committed herself to ‘work out [her] own salvation with fear and trembling’—Phil 2:12). Whether or not a comparably ‘high’ view of marriage existed outside the New Testament—and since Thraede’s article this question must remain open—there can be no doubt that this is a distinctively ‘Christian’ view, relating marriage to the central affirmations of the faith. Exactly the same may be said of the exhortation to the slaves, particularly in 1 Peter.

But we are still not in a position finally to assess the relationship between Galatians 3:28 and the *Haustafeln*. In order to do this we need our final section.

Overthrow

Here we must consider the vital question of eschatology; for on any account it must be granted that Paul’s eschatology is, if not the key to his ethics, at least an essential element in it—and it is frequently maintained that the eschatological perspective of Ephesians and Colossians differs markedly from that of the major Paulines. This judgement naturally has an effect on the interpretation of the *Haustafeln*, as we have already seen, especially in the work of J T Sanders. Was the parousia gradually demythologized, so that ‘in Col. and Eph. it is no longer a matter of the Lord on the way, but of the Lord on the throne’³⁷? That there is a refocusing of the eschatological perspective between the major Paulines and

³⁵ *Pietas*, 361 n 10, 364f.

³⁶ *Haustafeln*, 161-171.

³⁷ Schrage, *NTS* (1975) 10.

Ephesians/Colossians seems clear, but whether this amounts to a radical change, or a new start, is highly doubtful.

For Sanders there is all the difference in the world between an ethic

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based upon an eschatology realised in the present, and one based upon a present, heavenly existence which will be revealed eschatologically. For him the movement from 'eschatological righteousness already declared' to 'practical righteousness here and now' follows logically and compellingly, but that from 'heavenly existence in Christ' to 'earthly righteousness to match' does not. But if the one follows, surely the other does as well. The reason why Sanders judges the two trains of thought so differently is because he makes the urgency of the expectation vital to the logic—an urgency present in the earlier epistles but not in Ephesians and Colossians.³⁸ But whether eschatological righteousness will be revealed sooner or later is entirely irrelevant as far as the logic of the deduction is concerned. If eschatological righteousness cannot logically ground present righteousness, no amount of urgency will heal the reasoning; and if it does logically ground it, no delay in its appearance will render the reasoning weak.

Even if the basic position be granted—that expectation of an imminent End has faded—this forms no ground to distinguish the ethic of Ephesians and Colossians from that of the earlier epistles: for the facts remain that Ephesians and Colossians are by no means devoid of eschatological expectation, that the *Haustafeln* themselves specifically ground their ethic in eschatology, and that they can be satisfyingly understood in terms of the traditional Pauline contrast between the 'already' and the 'not yet', in a way which not only shows their unity with Galatians 3:28, but also supplies the key to the right understanding of that verse. This requires substantiation!

Gnilka points out that an 'undoubted' tension exists between the Colossian *Haustafel* and Colossians 3:11, where the equality in Christ of Jew, Greek, slave, free, etc, is taught.³⁹ He might go further and point out that the same tension exists within the *Haustafel* itself. Colossians 3:25 tells the slaves (RSV), 'The wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality'. At the eschatological judgement there will be equality of treatment⁴⁰—but no attempt is made to suggest that this eschatological equality, which is expressed as a principle in the *present* tense, should affect the institution of slavery now.

The reason for this appears when we realise that the *Haustafel* draws upon and is integral with the general themes of the letter.⁴¹ Particularly it depends upon what the letter has taught about authority, which was a vital theme in the debate with the early gnosticism which forms its background in Colossae. Against the view that there is a celestial power-hierarchy apart from Christ, the letter has argued that Christ alone is κύριος, and that all other forms of authority (including all κυριότητες) were created through him (1:16) and have now been defeated by

³⁸ Sanders, *Ethics*, 56: 'It is because of his belief in an imminent eschaton that Paul can command righteousness now of those who are not in fact righteous but who have been accounted so' (his emphasis). At 56 n 21 he criticises Merk for overlooking 'the importance of *imminence* in the eschatological grounding' (again, his emphasis).

³⁹ *Kolosserbrieif*, 216.

⁴⁰ The phrase is difficult to interpret in its context—but probably unjust masters are especially in mind.

⁴¹ Schroeder, *Haustafeln*, 80. Contrary to Lohmeyer 153 and Crouch, *Origin* 10f.

him on the cross (2:15). Christ is the head over them (2:10). But, though defeated, it is still possible to be ensnared by these *στοιχεῖα τοῦ*

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κόσμου (2:8, 20-22), which are still very much alive in the realm of *τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* (3:2, 5). The new resurrected life in Christ is hidden (3:3), waiting to be gloriously revealed (3:4). The structure is identical to that which we encounter in 1 Corinthians 15: Christ is reigning already (15:25), but the goal of his reign is a future defeat of the 'powers', which is associated with the eschatological resurrection (15:23f).⁴²

Into this pattern the *Haustafel* fits. In the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet', elements of the new age break in beside continuing elements of the old. From the point of view of the old age, earthly authority is to be accepted as part of creation (Col 1:16); from that of the new, it is a challenge to the authority of Christ, defeated on the cross (2:15). 'The flesh' as a ruling principle has been cast off at baptism (2:11), but the slaves must obey their *κύριοι κατὰ σάρκα* wholeheartedly (3:22).⁴³ The tension between the two ages comes out clearly in the admonition to obey one lord for the sake of another—to work in the service of a man *ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώποις!*⁴⁴

This insight in turn tells us how to interpret Galatians 3:28. It would be right to call it, with Stagg,⁴⁵ a 'vision', provided the vision is understood as apocalyptic! It views the church from the point of view of 'the new man' (Col 3:10). But the new man is constantly at war with the old, and experiences his newness only partially in this age. In relation to the three categories mentioned, we may perhaps summarise the situation as follows: 1 The barrier between Jew and Gentile *can* really be broken down, though it cost tremendous efforts and heartache in the early years of the church to do so, and we must still take great care. 2 That between male and female can with great effort be overcome within the confines of a marriage, if the partners commit themselves to working out the 'mystery' of the incarnation in their relationship, but Paul seems to give little ground for hope that it can be substantially overcome in church or society. 3 That between slave and master—and here we may translate: the barriers that exist in the church because of the economic, political and social power structures of the world in which the church is set—is with us to stay for the duration of this age as part of its created 'form' (which is yet passing away, 1 Cor 7:31), although eden here hints of the new will appear as slaves and masters together live for their Lord Christ (and again let us translate: as Christians in whatever walk seek, in whatever way they can, to qualify the powers of this world in and through the name of Christ).

The tension between Galatians 3:28 and the *Haustafeln* resolves itself as the underlying structures of Pauline theology are investigated. Because such an investigation really lies beyond the scope of a paper of this sort, the suggestion here must be accepted for what it is: a

⁴² Schroeder, *op cit*, 172-174 rightly sees the relevance of the powers of the world to a theological understanding of the *Haustafeln*, but does not, to my mind, fully follow up his own lead here.

⁴³ Schrage 11 is surely right that the qualification *κατὰ σάρκα* in Col 3:22 and Eph 6:5 indicates 'eine deutliche Abwertung'.

⁴⁴ The clearest presentation of the *Haustafeln* in this theological context is to be found in !' Wendland 43-45, although he does not provide much exegetical detail. It seems clear that the discussion centred on the word *xvetos* in Col 3:22-4:1 draws upon the ambivalent relationship displayed earlier between the *κυριότητες* and the *κύριος χριστός*.

⁴⁵ *Woman*, 165.

Stephen Motyer, "The Relationship Between Paul's Gospel of 'All One in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28) and the 'Household Codes'," *Vox Evangelica* 19 (1989): 33-48.

proposal in need of further substantiation, and perhaps for that very reason a fit subject for an essay of this sort!

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