

Postcolonial Reading of ὑποτασσώ (to submit) in Ephesians 5:21: Hope for the Family Today

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Abstract

There has been a lot of discussion and debate in recent years over the precise meaning and interpretation of Ephesians 5:21. The concept of ὑποτασσώ (to submit) in the book of Ephesians is one that has been grossly misinterpreted and misapplied in different situations but worst of all, in the marriage set up. This is even complicated by an alternative interpretation, popularly known as 'mutual submission,' which has become increasingly accepted in Church circles. Yet, the interpretation of Ephesians 5:21 is to be viewed as one of the foundational verses upon which a successful approach to marriage, self and life are built. Incidentally, this verse has been used by those who are in power to suppress the voices of those who may not be in a position to voice their views. This paper examines the concept of ὑποτασσώ as used in Paul's letter to the Ephesians through the lenses of postcolonial biblical criticism with a view of recovering an interpretation Paul had in mind informed by the circumstances surrounding him at the time of writing. More specifically, the paper endeavors to investigate the concept of ὑποτασσώ with its cognates, in light of current Postcolonial studies in order to see the impact the Roman Empire had on Paul and his understanding of the concept in discussion. The purpose of this paper is to first, evaluate the contemporary historical and social-scientific interpretations of ὑποτασσώ and argue for the importance of understanding the concept in the light of ancient rhetoric. Secondly, having situated this paper within a postcolonial dialogue, the study will seek a specific definition of Postcolonial interpretation looking for domination/ subordination relationships in the book of Ephesians. Additionally, the paper will seek to reconsider Paul's ὑποτασσώ in light of the slavery metaphor by comparing Paul's concept with the ancient concept of submission. And finally, the paper will offer a new interpretation of the term ὑποτασσώ as it reveals Paul's suppressed status as a colonized Jew looking for an alternative way to express the deep longing of his heart for an ultimate master worthy of his loyalty and devotion. It is the intention of this paper to bring to the surface the slave metaphor and stimulate the mind of the readers as to the exact meaning of the concept under study in order for us to grasp the relationship of Paul with Christ as seen from the book of Ephesians.

Key words: Family, Ephesians, Postcolonial Reading

Background of the Problem

Submission is a term that has been greatly misused within the church circles. It is a term that has been used to elevate one person over another, particularly in reference to men as they relate to women in marriage. In order to understand the term and its application in scripture, we must first get a proper definition of the word and then place the term in its proper contextual setting, while paying attention to the life obtaining at the time Paul wrote the letter. It is probable for one to think that Paul's feelings of being under arrest, subjected to some powers that confined him from preaching the gospel could have formed the backcloth of his writings. Hence, if he wanted to declare the Roman systems of slavery, misogamy, and paternity, as unethical, he would have been unable to do so openly, at least in this letter.

This idea is explicated in his counsel in what constitutes the household code. That, masters must treat their slaves ethically, husbands must live their lives sacrificially for their wives, and that fathers must not exasperate their children, is considered to have been revolutionary for Paul's time. The tone of a power dominating at the time of writing this letter is rife and is indispensably viscous. Hence, the concept ὑποτασσώ finds its roots in this kind of environment. Against these historical challenges, Paul rises above the existing laws and systems to give counsel to those in power and those being ruled by the powers that be.

Incidentally, it is no surprise then that many resist and oppose the biblical teaching on submission, not because it is wrong but because it has been directly associated either, with those who hold to women's liberation theories, and popular human rights' movements, or those who are for the establishment of injustice and deprivation of certain inalienable human rights.

Consequently, those who are submissive are labeled as weak or disabled. It is possible that some Christians might be in such an error, either because of a distorted understanding of the concept, or have attacked and disdained the concept, because it is not the “in-thing” especially in this age of addictions, therapy and support groups. Far fewer Christians are struggling to understand and apply the biblical teaching on submission than those who are trying to cast it aside like an old, unwanted shoe.

Problem statement

This is an attempt to demonstrate how the prevailing and ever-growing culture of abusive use of the concept of ὑποτασσώ in Ephesians, both at the family level and work-related places, could be addressed through a postcolonial reading. Particularly, the study seeks to establish the relationship between the Bible and ὑποτασσώ (to submit), and to offer a biblical solution to deal with the culture of abuse of power and privileges.

While the concept has been used to prop up slavery, promote a view of women that is degrading at best, and promote a paternalistic worldview, can this verse be used this way? Is that what Paul meant? Essentially, this study seeks to ask: how can we address the problem of misunderstanding and misapplication of the concept ὑποτασσώ (to submit) through a postcolonial reading? Moreover, while interrogating the phenomenon through postcolonial reading resources, the study will seek to identify available resources in the book of Ephesians that would help to give a clear understanding of the concept. In the light of these concerns, and the focus on postcolonial biblical studies and their potential for such assistance, the main problem for the study emerged.

The Importance of the Study

This study attempts to reflect further on the subject of submission with a conviction that the concept is a vitally important part of the Christian life. Below are some four claims advanced by this study as to why the study warrants such careful considerations as viewed from Ephesians. First, submission is the key to unity and harmony in both human relationships, as well as the Godhead family. Thus, In the Godhead family, in the church, in marriage, and in work related relationships, submission is the basis for unity.

Secondly, Satan's fall and his on-going rebellion is a manifestation of his refusal to submit to God; he likewise tempts men to follow in his footsteps. Third, submission is at the core of man's relationship with God. Submission and sin are almost antithetical. Each is almost the exact opposite of the other. Salvation is the solution to man's sin. When we are born again by faith in Christ, it is submission to God, to the authority of His Word, and to Christ as his means of salvation. As man's refusal to submit to God brought about the fall of man, so man's submission to God brings about salvation.

Fourth, submission is at the heart of discipleship. Jesus called men not only to believe in Him but to follow Him. A disciple is a learner and a follower, a student who has submitted himself to his teacher. Submission is therefore one of the prominent themes in the epistles, whether the technical term for submission occurs or not. These form key aspects that the study will seek to address.

Methodology

This paper seeks to evaluate and give alternative interpretation to the Christian understanding of ὑποτασσώ as found in Ephesians using a Postcolonial reading approach in order to liberate and encourage Christians to participate in the political, social and religious issues within their given

environments as free and not slaves. Postcolonial biblical criticism was incorporated in this study because of its inclusion of the subaltern dimensions in biblical interpretation. According to Ahmad Aijaz (1996:289), Postcolonial biblical criticism applies to worldwide conditions of relations between the colonial powers and the colonized nations. This method has been used in other disciplines and biblical studies as a tool for ‘colonial discourse analysis’ (Stephen D Moore, 2006:82). Moreover “postcolonial theory is a tool for biblical interpretation that deals with the Bible as a cultural product in time and space” (Lozaraze Rukundwa, 2007:339). Thus, the chief concern of the method is the attempt to know how imperial ideology influenced the production of biblical texts, and how this ideology was to be read and interpreted by those to whom the Bible was meant to liberate. In order to apply postcolonial biblical criticism successfully, this study will take great interest in the writings of Stephen Moore and Fernando Segovia (2005) because of their application of postcolonial theory to Markan studies. Though they did not consider the concept of *hupotaso* from the book of Ephesians, they formed important resources for their inclusion of religious dimensions in the critique of imperial ideology in prevailing biblical culture.

Significance of Postcolonial reading

Postcolonial reading of Scriptures as a method started in the 1960s with the intention of facilitating independence from colonialism in many forms. The term ‘post-colonial’ refers to the historical period of the aftermath of colonialism. In fact, the term postcolonial means:

A reactive resistance discourse of the colonized, who critically interrogate dominant knowledge of systems in order to recover the past from the Western slander and misinformation of the colonial period, and who also continue to interrogate Neo-colonizing tendencies after the declaration of independence³.
(Sugirtharajah, 2002:13).

The proponents of this method question the domination or the power of western colonizers and also the neo-colonialism. This approach is not about the development of the colonial thought as much as it is an instrument or method of analyzing situations where one social group dominates over another (ibid.:11). Consequently, postcolonial biblical criticism seeks to situate colonialism at the core of the Bible and biblical interpretation. This is so because, from the postcolonial point of view, the Bible has been read and interpreted by western scholars from western cultural and colonial perspectives.

Moreover, the concept of *hupotaso* in this study is one that has had a lot of western garb in Christian clothing. Thus, one may argue that this was done by the colonialists in order to gain power over and control indigenous people, women, blacks and the others who were colonized. Indeed, even indigenous peoples have, in their commentaries, discourses and writings, often ignored their own culture and reinforced the colonial masters' powers and practices.

Therefore, postcolonial discourses emerged for two reasons: first to analyze the strategies used by the colonizers and constructed images of the colonized and secondly, to study how the colonized themselves articulated their self-worth and identity. Incidentally, the Bible was used by the colonizers to control the colonized by imposing their own power, authority, standards and practices and to silence the voices of the colonized and powerless people (Dube, 2006:297). Consequently, analysis of the colonial elements in biblical texts reveal that the colonial motive was to colonize indigenous people, and that it is only through postcolonial scholarship that the colonial perspectives are overturned and dismantled.

From a postcolonial point of view, the biblical texts also reflect four codes: first is the 'hegemonic code,' or the 'throne-succession narrative.' This code considers those with power

such as kings, businessmen, elites, and is replete with terms such as business, jobs, money, luxury, success and conquests. To decode these, the postcolonial theorists try to find the people who are left out by the authors and investigate how they react to those powers that this code legitimizes. Secondly, is the ‘professional code,’ which fabricates the laws and the rules for the people, usually to promote hegemonic interests. It centralizes law, traditions and customs to maintain order in society. The third code is the ‘negotiate code,’ which attempts to fit into any context at any time so that it adapts or re-contextualizes a story or an experience. By this, the postcolonial reader searches to see whether or not the texts reflect and adapt the situations of the time as God-given, or mutable. The last code is the voice of protest and is oppositional, raising the needs, dreams and hopes of the marginalized (Fiorenza, 2007:123).

In summary, postcolonial interpreters usually read the texts with three approaches or criticisms: first, they find the colonial contexts, colonial ideas and theologies inside the texts – in other words, they study the colonial elements; secondly, they try to find the colonial intentions hidden in the interpretations of western traditional scholarship and question the different interpretations with their colonial interests and concerns; and thirdly, they try to find the postcolonial concern and reread the texts with a postcolonial, liberation perspective. This is the approach that this paper takes while handling the concept ὑποτασσώ as used in Ephesians.

Household Codes in the Graeco-Roman World

Introduction

The household codes were created for a household (in Greek, *oikia*, in Latin, *familia*) composed of husbands, fathers, masters, wives, children and slaves to undergird all human relationships.

The New Testament codes in Col.3:18–4:1; Eph.5:22–6:9; 1Pet. 2:13–3:7 are known by the German word *Haustafeln* or ‘household codes’ (Achte-meier, Green and Meyer, 2001: 524). These prescriptive instructions describe the reciprocal responsibilities given to the family members such as husband/wife, parents/children and master/slave. Submission and obedience from the inferior partners were demanded, whilst the authority and power of the superior partners was legitimized.

The NT household codes were probably written during the period from 69 AD until 117 AD, when the Graeco-Roman culture flourished, under cruel emperors such as Vespasian (Perkins 1988:5-7; Pliny, 1963:13) and Titus, who are widely known for the roles they played in persecuting the Christian church. These codes must have borne the undertones of colonialism as it was, when addressed to Christians living in the Roman Empire, particularly in the region of Asia Minor (Roberts, 2005:150).

However, Christians believed that they were not only the members of their earthly households, but also of the household of God or the Church. Managing their households well was as important as establishing an organized household of God (1 Tim 3: 5). In the same way each household was an important feature of a secure society for the Graeco-Roman worlds.

Household codes, in their patriarchal structure, were necessary for the orderliness of the society, especially in dealing with social, moral or ethical problems, and for ethical instruction in the Hellenistic world.

Moreover, they were created for political purposes, many parallels can be found ranging from the very beginning of Greek kingdoms to the decline of the Roman Empire (Balch, 1991: 23).

The *Haustafeln* in the NT is therefore not a new nor unique phenomenon. In fact, two groups used such codes. First, were the political leaders and their advisors who used them to gain political mileage by creating an obedient citizenry and secondly, it was used with an apologetic purpose, intended for minority religious groups, who were under suspicion from the established political order. Thus, the following questions arise: how did Graeco-Roman political rulers create and exercise a system of submission of the subalterns by using the household codes? Are these codes similar in structure and functions? How did the NT household codes agree with (or reject) imperialism or colonialism and the patriarchal system, thereby suppressing others? When clearly answered, the above questions will provide in the foregoing a latitude that provides the lenses through which the concept above can be understood.

Submission in African Context

In traditional African communities, young people were socialized based on gender, age and status roles (Salm & Faola, 2004:138). This informed their roles and responsibilities even as they were growing up. On one hand, boys were taught to take care of cattle, sheep and goats and at the same time trained to be home guards to provide security for the family. On the other hand, girls were taught house chores like cleaning the homestead, the house, and keep all household goods in a clean manner, besides preparation of food for the family (Afolayan, 2004:194). In African culture, women were taught to unreservedly obey and surrender to their husbands (Charvet (1982:4). Thus, women were seen as belonging to the kitchen since their dominion does not extend beyond the house related chores.

Incidentally the African culture considered a husband as the breadwinner of the family as well as the head (Charvet 1982:3). The resultant effect of this was that African men had this mentality ingrained in them that made them behave the way they did. That is the reason why if a man would fail to provide for his family, he would feel inferior and insecure before his wife.

Moreover, Mukonyora (1999:277) opines that in Africa, males were regarded as the guardians of land and lineage. This is the reason why a married woman had to adopt the husband's name, a sign of submission to her husband. On the other hand, in order to demonstrate his headship, the husband would ensure that both his wife and children were disciplined (Holleman,1952:277). In fact, Hindin (2003:502) suggests that husbands were permitted to moderately beat their wives, as a way of exercising authority and control in the home. Every boy and girl growing up in this culture knew what was culturally expected of them (Otiso 2006:93-95). Hence the idea of debating to know who does what for example in marriage was totally unknown since both men's and women's worldview of marriage was culturally constrained.

Given the African set up, men and women still look up to this understanding of submission and headship, even when in church, besides the changing times when women can go beyond the household chores. The concept need not be redefined but rather defined within the scope of the Christian setting and the Jesus ideals for marriage rather than the colonial absurdities that all along have defined marriage.

Greek Household Codes

The New Testament household codes aforementioned had their origin in the household codes of the Greek colonial period, with the flowering of the Greek alphabet script and literature of Homer and Hesiod, during which time philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle flourished

(Robertts, 2005). Greek colonization was caused by an expansion in population, when the traders and nobles started to establish far-flung centers on their new trade routes. Slavery was practiced to further the economy in trading or manufacturing. Consequently, many small self-governing communities, known as *polis* or city-states, were created as a social and religious tie to the colonies. Athens became a leading city of Greek culture and was later renowned as being the city of philosophers, who included: Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. They influenced the development of a direct democracy, governed by the Athenian privileged male citizens but women and slaves were excluded from political rights. The written law codes reflected the life of the *polis*, affected and shaped the lives of the citizens and legalized previously oral traditions (Foxhall & Lewis, 1996:10). According to Standhartinger (2001: 23, 117, 120-122), the origin of the household codes went far back to those found in Pseudo Charondas and Pseudo Zaleukos which were dated between the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, the beginning of the classical period. During these times, the urban-centre governments relied on the livelihoods of the households living within their state.

In Greek civilization, a state was the place where there were people to rule namely, male or husbands or rulers or guardians and people to be ruled, subordinate groups: wives, children and slaves. According to Aristotle, men have a natural and perfect reason to use authority or power (Taylor, 1934:309). These men held the right to own the lands, manage the source of wealth, and undertake civic duties, such as holding public office, equipping warships and facilitating religious rites. Women, it was believed, have less reasoning capacity and therefore have no authority to use what they have, while children have only incomplete reasoning, and slaves have none. While in normal civil duties, the ruler and the ruled usually interchanged the authority, yet the husband and wife never interchanged authority because the husband was by nature, better as

he represented the soul, while the wife represents the body (Everson, 1996:11). This was the basis on which classes were formed and discriminations created.

The householder's (*κύριος*) position was hereditary, being passed from father to son in the form of citizenship. Although women could be (and often were) citizens, they did not possess the same civic rights as male citizens and could not become householders, thus legitimizing the authority of men and the subservience of women, children and slaves. Though the ancient colonial household codes were created mainly for concerns of the state, they were known as rules for cultural, social, and economical enterprises. First, the codes were used to preserve the patriarchal system based on the 'honor and shame' ethic in the Mediterranean cultural concepts. The male's honor was maintained through his status, power and reputation. Through loyalty and unity, kinship groups (or city-states) protected each other from outside attack.

Consequently, aggressiveness, virility, sexual prowess, and their production of sons were the most important work. Protecting the weak which was seen as the duty of the strong male or patron was also associated with 'honor' (Everson, 26-36). Moreover, honor entailed the attainment of sexual purity, modesty and the procreation of legitimate sons. Without these duties, women's life could lead to shame. This portrays this culture as competitive, where a person preserved and promoted themselves and their family first, then revenge would follow if their honor was not attainable (Fiorenza 1997:238).

Roman Imperial Household Codes

The household code was still the basic socio-political structure in the Roman Empire, even though major economic and social changes had occurred during the Hellenistic period. At this time, senatorial families lost their economic influence, leading to increased distribution of wealth

that resulted in the founding of many more household communities (Osiek & Balch, 1999:37-40). The Emperor then took control over these households and reformed the household model to legitimize himself as *paterfamilias* and so replaced the former city-states model (Miles, 2007:76).

Further, Caesar Augustus' governing body was known as the Imperial household or Caesar's household. This household included not only his extended family, but all his administrators from all over the Empire. He was designated as the father, not only of the imperial family, but also the whole empire (lord-*κύριος* or *despotes* or Latin as *paterfamilias* (Obrien,1993). For example, the inscription of Corinth states: "*Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, also, Father of his country, constructed this road*" (Hubard, 2010:128). This means that their organizations were strictly hierarchal and patriarchal, where the elite formed only a very small part of the total population.

The rest of the population was the 'lower class' which was composed of freeborn citizens, non-citizens, freed persons and slaves. In these ordinary households, fathers, who had the power of life and death over them all, took care of the family and controlled extended family members for up to three generations of wives, children and slaves, making this structure as a steep social pyramid where the Emperor elevated himself (Vener, 1983:47-50).

In Nero's time, his tutor Seneca, a full member of the senate, gave his advice only to husbands, fathers and masters (Hay, 2000:140). His letter 94.1 advises how a husband should conduct himself towards his wife, or how a father should bring up his children, or how a master should rule his slaves (Inwood, 2005:116). According to him, fathers should treat their children strictly which is an expression of ideal love and be interested in their education. The Emperor Nero and

Seneca thus maintained the existing patriarchal norms. However, Seneca's view on slavery was somewhat of a development, in that he saw slaves as human beings and encouraged owners to treat them fairly. However, one wonders why this noble idea was not pushed to the level where legislations towards the abolition of slavery were not made.

However, during the early Roman law, after marriage, a wife was under the control of her husband. However, in the late republic period, in relation to high-class women, their father's authority of them was no longer transferred to their husband (Garnsey & Sallen, 1987:126-139). After the death of the father, his daughter became a property owner. Even though Augustus gave some freedom and legal status to women, practicing gender equality was not tolerated. Therefore, the Roman codes were created to make sure that in marriage, women were retiring, and altogether submissive to their husbands. The system further required women and slaves to change their religion from that of their fathers' to their husband's or from one master to another respectively while children adopted their parents' religious rites (Vener 1983:65).

Incidentally, religion reinforced the concept of the *paterfamilias*, with the emperor as the head. Women and slaves suffered, as any deviation from that social standard was deemed unacceptable and designated as deviancy that required punishment (Vener 28). Consequently, the Graeco Roman world did not just domesticate the household codes as they received them from the Greeks, which in this case discriminated against women and treated them as less human, but also perpetuated the same as evinced in their religion and civil world.

Early Christianity and the Household Codes

The household codes in the epistle to the Ephesians can also be found from two main groups of Christian records; the Canonical that includes the letter to the Colossians and 1Peter on one hand and the non-Canonical that includes the early church fathers.

Early Church Fathers

When the early Christian fathers Clement and Polycarp were persecuted by Domitian, it was caused by his confusing Christianity with Judaism and Atheism. Ignatius of Antioch, whose works were similar to the NT codes was put to death during the reign of Trajan. However, the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas mention three subordinate groups thus, women, children and slaves. These codes were written for leaders to teach subordinate groups to be submissive and are more similar to the Graeco-Roman household code. The husbands' authoritative role over his wife has been reinforced throughout all ages. Thus, in this case, women's submissive roles were to be pure in morals, to love and be dutiful to their husband, and also to teach their children.

New Testament Household Codes

The household codes in Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 5:22-6:9 and 1 Pet 3:1-7; 2:18-22 only heighten the standing of the colonized people's socio-political position by the adoption and revision of the previously discussed Graeco-Roman and Jewish household codes with the concept of 'the lordship of Christ' as the model for Christian conduct. Even though they were religiously motivated codes, the tenor of colonial and patriarchal elements was strongly pronounced.

Thus, the conventional views were legalized within these adapted codes whereby God is viewed as the real father, husband, master and ruler. Further, Old Testament references were incorporated in these household codes. For instance, Ephesians 5:31 quotes Genesis 2:23-24; Ephesians 6:2 quotes Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16; 1Peter 3:6 quotes Gen 18:12. The

most distinctive linguistic usage in the code is the imperative mode and the use of participles for exhortations such as ‘be subject’ to your husband in Col 3:18; ‘be subject’ to husband or to the master in Eph 5:21 and 1 Pet 3:1, 2:18; ‘love your wife’ in Col 3:1, Eph 5:25 and ‘live with them’ in 1 Pet. 3:7; ‘obey your parents or your masters’ ὑπακούετε in Col 3:20, 22 and Eph 6:1, 5; Fathers ‘do not provoke your children to anger’ in Col 3:21 and Eph 6:4; masters ‘to treat’ the slaves well in Col 4:1 and ‘to do’ the same in Eph 6:9. This style is uncommon in other household codes.

Exegesis of ὑποτασσώ

Ephesians is notable for its domestic code treatment in 5:21–6:9, covering husband-wife, parent-child, and master-slave relationships. In 5:22, wives are urged to submit to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. In older Greek manuscripts the masculine present passive participle ὑποτασσόμενοι of the verb ὑποτασσώ as found in Ephesians 5:21, is translated as ‘submitting oneself continually’ (Mounce, 1993). This is partly because it is in the present participle showing a continuing action and is passive meaning that an action is being done on the subject. Therefore, the concept of ὑποτασσώ is not that one should expect, require or even demand. It is a personal, voluntary surrender to one another.

Ours is to allow this submission to take place. Contrary to the assertions that Ephesians 5:22 commands women to submit to their husbands with no exception to it, these assertions do not just lack scriptural backing, but are barbaric, demeaning and a violation of human will. And even if that command was there as the case may seem to suggest, it is in passive hence it is a command not to do the submission rather to allow submission to take place. Further, there is no participle or verb of ὑποτασσώ that occurs in verse 22. The continuing theme of submission is

implied but not stated in verse 22, and this is not uncommon in Greek grammar for an unstated verb, to be understood from preceding verses. Ephesians 5:21 in the SBL Greek New Testament reads ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ. Here, Paul has instructed believers to submit themselves to one another in the fear or reverence of Christ, as the basis and motivation not the culture nor coercion.

Theological reflections on ὑποτασσώ

It is important to note that New Testament household codes used a Christological framework as their point of reference in determining their household code. For instance, Paul writing to the Colossians demanded that wives should submit as fitting in the Lord (3:18), that children obey as a duty in the Lord (3:20) and, that slaves should obey as it were, serving the Lord (3:22-4:1). These serve to remind the believers that Christ is the Lord of the laws whose norms and rules one should follow. This Lordship of Christ starts from the household, extends to the society and then to the whole universe. Lincoln (106) confirms that, as Christ is the Lord of the universe and wisdom above all cosmic powers and knowledge, he is still the ruler of paterfamilias. Ephesians' teachings on children's obedience (6:1) and slaves' obedience as doing the will of God and as service to the Lord (6:6-7) may also be viewed as ethically and morally Christological.

Therefore, the household codes are centered on the Lordship of Christ. Human beings are then presented as the slaves of Christ (Eph. 6:5, 9). However, the household codes in 1 Peter bring to view another interesting hierarchy and patriarchy paradigm which starts from God (2:19, 3:5) and then goes to Christ. Here, it brings in the concept of the Christ who was to suffer (2:21) which slaves should follow as an example. This radical change makes Christ's lordship different from the role of the emperor who was the absolute monarch of the Mediterranean world. While

the Roman emperor normally demanded the people to follow their laws and kept religious institutions under his control, Christ never loaded anything on his Church. He emphasized freedom of choice and love as the governing principle in all relationships. That even as the Savior of the world, people have the choice either or not, to submit to his will.

Lincoln (127-128) describes it as an ‘ameliorating of the structure,’ where Christians want to be under the rule of Christ rather than any other earthly masters. The head and body metaphor (5: 23), which places Christ as head and the church as the body, parallels Plato’s concept of the headship of a ruler in the hierarchal and patriarchal setting. The character of the benefactor is highlighted as the Savior, one who can sanctify his body members, give his life for them, and not only lend his own resources to cling to another body, but who can provide them with what they need (5:23-31).

Similarly, the slaves were to see Christ as their heavenly master (Col 4:1; Eph 6:9) who is different from the earthly master (Col 3:22; Eph 6:5). Obedience to the earthly master is also obedience to the heavenly master, who, based on a person’s deeds, can both punish and award at the same time. Consequently, they need to take ‘fleshly relationships’ seriously, with a social concern, and to seek stability.

Moulton (1963: 56, 130) clearly states that it is not about one’s rights in the text, but service, love and concern for one another. Here, he legalized the first century norm of marriage for the twentieth century as a perfect union of two people whose foundation is God. Further, he observed that those who are in authority should refrain from threatening slaves in order to avoid rebellion. However, he felt that Christian teaching offered a better method; for slaves who had done well should be rewarded.

Incidentally, Moulton knew about the subordinated and discriminated situation of women and slaves. Although Neil encouraged masters to treat their slaves as human beings and recognized human rights, he stated that no man/woman should attempt to alter the existing social norms as postulated by the Graeco-Roman world, nor challenge the authority of the Bible, especially with issues related to submission. The *pro-status quo* texts such as Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-22, and 1 Peter 3:1-7; 2:18-22, call for the submission of women, children and slaves and promote the authority of the husband, father and master. Therefore, household codes became core teachings by which the state and religion (church) would be affected or benefited.

However, Sugirtharajah (2002: 75-79) refers to these codes as the ‘professional code’ created by scholars, interpreters and academic leaders to maintain order and stability, arguing that the household texts have direct connections with the gender, sexism, child abuse, and human trafficking issues within the socio-economic situations in most cases practiced within jurisdictions that are dictatorial in nature.

He further observes that cultural values and poverty force women to become victims, through the fulfillment of family obligations and struggling to make a living. Thus, a reflection of the impact of the global capitalistic ideologies, where the marginalized are exploited and dominated.

Therefore, Postcolonial Biblical interpreters among other things highlight global capitalism’s exploitation. Consequently, it is the submission of this study that the household code from the Graeco-Roman world was only Christianized and made to apply across the family relationships in order to create order in the respective empires which in the long run has impacted negatively on the mission of the Church.

Decolonizing the Greco-Roman Religious Household Code

Eduard Schweitzer, a Swiss New Testament scholar, viewed the household code in Ephesians and Colossians as a counteraction to asceticism which he saw as destroying the order of God, and leading to the abuse of Christian freedom and equality (1976:10). For him, the household code reflects the physical weakness of women, the injustice of slavery and the hierarchical power of males. However, for the sake of Christianity, the household code prevents social or militant revolution and emancipation, and calls for inward transformation in Christ, rather than conformity. In this respect, the household code maintains the political order of the first century and functions through the reconciliation and reconstruction, brought by Christianity, in modifying secular ethics through Christology and Soteriology (ibid282-287).

The concept of colonial mimicry, as we know from Bhabha, is both resemblance and menace. Bhabha suggests that the colonized victim will always bear the mark of their colonial enculturation (1994:86). This colonial mimicry borders on mockery of the colonized of which Pauline writings in Ephesians is a superb example, thus, becoming a hybrid site (1990:207-221). Thus, though ὑποτασώ may have had certain connotation as it was being written, it is possible now to read it with a difference bearing in mind the cognates and context of the concept, holding on to the superiority of Christian beliefs.

The idea of ‘being in Christ’ and the ‘church and Christ’ marriage analogy in Ephesians made the Christian household codes different from the other Hellenistic and Jewish cultures. These ideas transformed the social structures of the time and called for the household members to be responsible and moral persons with a liberationist worldview, granting Christian women a higher status than other women in the Graeco-Roman World.

Conclusion

From the Ancient Greek, to the Primordial African culture and even the early Christian era, there were no major changes to the codes and their authority. Politics and patriarchal concerns were the main driving forces for the superior to legitimize their authority, and to control or suppress any possible revolts by the inferior concerning their rights to economic, social and religious, and political status. The inferior on the other hand tried to safeguard or defend their safety, identity and stability. This helped to reinforce state control over the people. To the rulers, the inferior group needed to be controlled, due to their limited reasoning, and inferior persons were not to demand equal rights. The pronounced teachings among Christian household codes in the world then may have sounded like women were the weaker sex, husband and wife were as Christ and church respectively, and God and Christ as masters.

These ideas found their way to the churches, and hence the need for postcolonial biblical interpreters to continue to decolonize them. Consequently, the words “submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” refer to the relations of life in both public and private spheres, not just about marriage. Moreover, it is clear in the Greek that in verse 21, being "subject" to others is a responsibility of all Christians. Each person in society must submit to one another voluntarily for vibrancy and healthy engagements.

Whereas, African traditional societies as well as the Graeco-Roman world loaded over women, demanded submission and took away their rights, it should not be so with Christianity. Instead, women like men, are to submit out of their own volition without coercion and have equal rights and standing before God. Thus, far from what has been propagated, that women are less equal as compared to men, the truth is that Ephesians does not support this practice. Consequently,

women like men though uniquely created, have equal opportunities both in the Church and outside the Church.

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