Patriarchy or Gender Equality? The Letter to the Ephesians on Submission, Headship, and Slavery

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Several years ago, June Jordan, a well-known poet at a prestigious university, published *Kissing God Goodbye* (New York: Anchor Books, 1997). She gave a reading from it in San Francisco that I heard broadcast on National Public Radio. Citing the Bible, Jordan listed what she perceived as God's numerous offenses against women, suggested that God has "more muscles than he knows what to do with," called him the author of patriarchy and slavery, and finally dismissed him as "*That* guy?" Her audience received the poem with roaring approval.

Christianity, along with other monotheistic religions, is indeed considered anti-woman and patriarchal, even by many of its practitioners. But was the early Christian movement patriarchal? Can we really, like this poet, lay the blame for patriarchy at its feet? A few New Testament scholars are now proposing that, rather than participating in and advocating patriarchy, the early Christians sought to overturn it.

In this paper, I bolster those arguments with insights about the origins of the structure of the traditional family found in the work of economist Gary S. Becker. I elaborate on his approach to locate patriarchy's source not in God, religion, or even in male malevolence, but in the economic conditions of pre-industrial, agriculturally dependent societies. The family practices of ancient Rome, which dominated the known world at the time of Christ, offer a classic example of just such an economically determined patriarchy. I then contrast the structure of patriarchy with a

key passage from the writings of Paul of Tarsus, Ephesians 5:20–6:9.[1] Paul, the early Christian leader who wrote the majority of the documents that were eventually compiled into the New Testament, is widely considered to have supported both slavery and the subordination of women. I will show that, to the contrary, his intent was not to promote but to repudiate patriarchy. In its place, Paul endorsed family relationships that rested upon (and helped promote) an alternative economic and social equilibrium, one that drew upon a distinction between behavior impelled by material constraints versus those with religious or spiritual motivations. The most succinct expression of this distinction is found in Jesus's injunction that humankind should not live by "bread alone" but by "every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

A Treatise on Patriarchy

In the dichotomy between spirit and flesh, patriarchy, especially the patriarchy of the Roman Empire, is very much on the "bread alone" side of this question. I follow S. Scott Bartchy, professor of Christian origins and New Testament history at UCLA, in defining patriarchy as not just the rule of men over women, but as the rule of a few men over *everyone* else, male and female.[2] Patriarchy thus entails not only the subordination of women and children, but also the subordination of most men. This repressive social system has its roots in the economic conditions that prevailed prior to the Industrial Revolution in the United States and western Europe. However, it must be noted that conditions very similar to ancient patriarchy continue today in most of the rest of the world. In such pre-industrial societies, households produced pretty much everything they consumed, even though they might engage in trade. Until well into the nineteenth century, for instance, American households purchased metal tools and salt, which generally could not be produced at home, but grew or made everything else.[3]

In his foundational work, *A Treatise on the Family* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), Gary Becker traces the origins of what economists call the sexual division of labor—the pattern of men and women performing different tasks—to the demands of such production, specifically to its demands for many members. In such economies, a young couple might start off alone, but hired servants, took on apprentices, or acquired slaves as soon as they could possibly afford them.[4] A better source of labor than servants, however, was children. Servants

tended to shirk, and their loyalty was often in doubt. Even the wealthy were considered to be putting their lives at risk if they had no one to care for them in illness but servants.[5] Children, in contrast, were much more likely to be devoted to the family's welfare, if for no other reason than that it was also their own. Moreover, children did not have to be paid and could be "produced" at home. Economist Adam Smith estimated that, in colonial America, a child's labor contributed 100 (English) pounds sterling to his family before he left home, a substantial sum of money in those days.[6]

The difference in fertility rates between an industrialized nation, where the average woman bears fewer than two children, and that of an agricultural nation like Uganda, where the average woman bears seven, reflects not so much a greater love for children or the relative unavailability of birth control as it does a greater need for help with farming and the household. In addition, in the absence of governmental or private programs to care for people in their old age, disability, illness, or widowhood, children are a critical source of support and care. While in the United States today infertility is viewed as mostly a personal heartbreak, in an unindustrialized nation, a couple's inability to have children can be an economic disaster.

Between the need for large families and high rates of child mortality, women were under a constant obligation to bear children. American fertility figures from 1800 indicate that one-quarter of the women of childbearing age gave birth each year[7] and that the average early nineteenth-century American woman, like the contemporary Ugandan, gave birth to about seven children during her lifetime.[8]

In a pre-industrial economy, child-bearing and child-rearing are women's most important tasks. However, there are still innumerable additional demands on a woman's labor. Becker attributes traditional family structure and the sexual division of labor to these continuing demands on a mother's time.[9] In addition to the need for frequent pregnancies, until the late 1800s, there was no substitute for human breast milk. Infants who did not have a human nurse died. These factors limited the kind of work that women could sensibly do. Families quickly learned to divide up work so that mothers could do the tasks that were compatible with pregnancy and lactation.

Spinning was the consummate female task, as it was easy to put down when a child needed to be picked up. The next steps in clothing

construction—weaving and sewing—were similarly compatible with child care. Consequently, home sewing became "women's work."[10] Cooking was a time-consuming task in the absence of pre-processed foodstuffs. Mothers, already housebound, were the logical persons to supervise the mixing and baking of bread and the lengthy processes of roasting and boiling that put food on the table. Women grew vegetables for household use, and in some circumstances, particularly in the absence of the plow, did the farming as well.[11] Women nursed the sick and the aged, processed herbs to make medicines, and supervised family hygiene, important and often time-consuming tasks in a world rife with deadly infections. In the United States, farm women often kept the financial accounts. Wives supervised the work of slaves involved in commercial production in the wealthy households of ancient Greece and Rome, and less wealthy women kept the shops where such family produce was sold.

As a result of these accommodations for child bearing, women's labor bound them to the house in a way that men's did not. What a society defines as "men's work" is determined by what is left over after the women do what they can with children present.[12] Thus, when fishing can be done close to home, fishing is women's work. When catching fish requires extended periods away, men become the fishers. Historically, men rather than women were the hunters, blacksmiths, long-distance traders, sailors, and warriors. After all, one could not go to war, to sea, or to Parliament, work a forge, or plow a field with a nursing infant in arms and young children in tow.

Domestic Specialization and Women's Subordination

For most women, their "domestic specialization" was not a problem. Few men had a choice about what they would do in life either; historically, 90 percent of the population, male and female, were peasants. Aside from childbearing, men got stuck with the nastiest and most dangerous work. Ultimately, however, it is the constraints of scarcity and the resulting need for women to bear children that allowed men to become dominant over them.

The very thing that made a woman valuable—her unique ability to bear children—also made her dependent.[13] The things that a wife and mother produced may have been essential to her family's survival, but she produced them for one particular household and for one particular set of people—her own family. A woman's most valuable product, children, was

of most worth to their own father. In a sense, this made a woman's husband and household her employer. She could change employment only at the price of a major and risky disruption in her life. She could certainly work in someone else's household, but there she would be a servant, not mistress of the house. Women who left their marriages under these circumstances left all that they had produced in the first household, including, most likely, their children, who were often considered to belong to their fathers.

In contrast, the husband's skills were more flexible. Less tied to the household, he could change employers far more easily than a wife could. This broader base of demand for men's labor made husbands less dependent in the marital relationship.

I am extending Becker's analysis since he does not, as far as I know, equate the results of this sexual division of labor with the word *patriarchy*. His analysis does, however, explain the historic subordination of women to men on several levels. Woman's domestic, family-centered roles meant that she would have less impact on the community than a man. This was true not so much because she was isolated—women may be just as visible in rural or small-town life as men—but because historically many of the government and business issues that determine civic power were of little concern to her. Politics usually did not affect home life directly and so were literally none of women's business. Few busy housewives had time for such concerns. Indeed, ancient Jewish law, recognizing the value of a mother's time, excused women from many of the religious obligations placed on men.

The expense of education (which Becker does note) compounded women's indifference. Few women knew enough about political (or religious) issues to begin to think of holding political or church office, or of even voting. For a woman to have a working knowledge of war and the military—both historically important components of political power—was unthinkable. Analogously, since it has no direct impact on their work, women in pre-industrial economies tend to have little interest in long-distance trading or manufacture outside of the home.

Furthermore, the fact that men were more likely than women to have access to cash and property also contributes to women's less powerful position within the family. In patrilocal societies, new brides move to their husbands' residence, thus guaranteeing that he owns the home and property. Similarly, men's greater freedom to engage in trade gives them

greater access to the cash proceeds from the sale of household products. In Uganda, for example, women grow and harvest the cash crop, coffee. Men take it to market—and they may or may not share the cash they obtain with their wives.[14]

Although many academic theories about gender claim that men became dominant over women because of man's superior size, strength, and aggression, historic family structure is better understood as based on a unique *female* characteristic: women's ability to bear children. As the only member of the marriage who could bear and feed children, women would still have ended up specialized to the home even if they had been bigger and stronger than men.[15] Although she may hold considerable power within her domestic areas of concern, a housewife had little decision-making authority or ability outside it. Thus, the strong economic need for women to bear children results in the economic realities of separate spheres for men and women and in women's subordination to men in family, society, government, and church.

Christianity and Roman Patriarchy

Christianity began as a small Jewish sect within Israel, a once-sovereign nation that was, like the rest of the known world in the first century, ruled by Rome. The Roman Empire was itself dominated by a class known as the "patricians," the powerful and wealthy men of the citizen class. This citizen class made up only a tiny proportion of the Roman population; but in Roman law, everyone else existed only to serve them. Ancient Rome was a highly agonistic (competitive, honor/shame) culture, in which promoting and preserving one's personal and family prestige were of the utmost importance. This culture required exacting revenge for all slights and injuries, and continual social contests to gain honor for oneself at the expense of others.[16] This struggle for power, honor, and respect had very real consequences in Rome, especially for people who did not achieve it. It is estimated that one third of the population of cities around the Mediterranean were enslaved, another third were former slaves, and most of the rest were "free" (never-enslaved) people who lived in dire poverty.[17] Patricians held life-and-death authority over their slaves and children, though not over their wives. In short, Rome was very much a "kill or be killed," "eat or be eaten" economy.

Households, among those wealthy enough to have a house, were also places of business, sheltering not only the patrician, his wife, and his

children (including grown children and their families), but also his slaves and production workshops. The Latin word *familia* referred to such households, often with the interactions between master and slaves considered more salient than those within the nuclear family itself.

Part of the Apostle Paul's reputation for supporting patriarchy comes from what some scholars perceive as similarities between his writings on the family and the "household codes" of conduct written by Greek and Roman philosophers like Plutarch and Aristotle.[18] While these secular writings enjoined obedience upon slaves, children, and wives, they were actually addressed to the family patriarchs themselves, encouraging them to "rule" or "govern" well those under their control. Some scholars see the texts labeled Ephesians 5:20–6:9 as the author's mirroring of these codes to assure secular authorities of the respectability and conformity of Christian family life.[19] This passage is the main source of an infamous Christian injunction, phrased in the familiar King James version as:

> Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.
> For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. . . . : and he is the saviour of the body. . . .
> Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. . . .
> Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. (Eph. 5:22–23, and 6:1, 5)

But a careful reading of this passage—one that does not take it out of its literary or social context—shows that, rather than supporting patriarchy, Paul was standing it on its head. As a leader of a very small, suspect sect, Paul could not hope to change the Roman social order. Instead, in this letter he asked each of the three pairs addressed—masters/slaves, fathers/children, and husbands/wives—to radically transform the meaning of these legal structures, renouncing the requirements of the flesh to achieve a higher spiritual goal.

Submission

Paul's treatise on the family is part of a larger discourse praising God for his forgiveness and munificent provision. The verse immediately preceding the passage under consideration begins: " . . . always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father, being subject to one another in awe of Christ . . . " (Eph. 5:20–21).[20] Thus the first step in understanding the later passages that seem to endorse patriarchy is to recognize that the injunctions for the submission of

wives and the obedience of slaves and children are part of a general instruction that everyone—husbands/fathers/masters included—submit to or be subject to each other.

A major impediment to understanding this passage, however, is the negative connotations that "submission," "submissive," or "be subject to" have in English. In English, to be submissive means to be obedient, docile, inferior, meek, quiet, numb, in need of guidance, or childlike. For example, a recent book on marital relationships defines submission as giving in to another's control: "Submission comes from a position of weakness. . . . Submission means enduring aversive behavior from your partner because you have or believe you have no alternative."[21] In contemporary usage, being submissive is more likely to be regarded as pathological rather than desirable.

In Greek, however, the language in which this letter was written, the word translated "submit" or "be subject to" lacks these connotations. It does not even mean to "obey." Nor does it mean to agree with someone or to give up one's own preferences. The root of the word that the King James translators rendered as "be subject to" (or alternatively, "submit yourself to") is *hypotasso: hypo* = "under" (e.g., hypodermic needle) and *tasso* = "to locate, put, or place." Together, they mean "locate or place under." *Hypotasso* is sometimes translated "put under."[22]

To understand what Paul meant when he asked his Christian readers to "put themselves under" each other, it is necessary to be aware of an important property of verbs known as "voice." English retains two voices: active and passive. The active voice shows the subject of a sentence performing the action in the sentence (e.g, "I teach Spanish."). In the passive voice, the subject receives, not performs, the action of the verb: ("I am taught Spanish."). The active form of "subject" or "put under" would be: "I will subject you to my own will," with its connotations in English of putting someone under my heel, trampling him underfoot, or pressing my thumb down on him. In the New Testament, no one was ever instructed to "subject" (active voice) anyone else. In fact, the Gospels record Jesus expressly forbidding his followers to "subject" other people. One example of the many such injunctions is found in Mark 10:42–44 (RSV):

> You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.
> But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.

In Ephesians 5:21, Paul clearly does not use "subject" in the active voice—so consciously or not, English speakers read it with passive meaning, in which the subject of the sentence is acted upon. To be passively "subject to" someone means to accept his domination, to do as he tells you, to give up, to be under the other's thumb, or to be trampled underfoot. Again, in English, passively accepting subjugation is not regarded as healthy or desirable.

But the word used in Ephesians 5 is not in the passive voice, either, but in the Greek middle voice, in which "the subject acts, directly or indirectly, upon itself."[23] An example is: "I teach myself Spanish." In the middle voice, the subject of the sentence is also the recipient of the action. *Hypotasso* in this instance is in the middle voice, and in this sentence means, "All of you place yourselves under one another" or "all of you subject yourselves to one another."

In instructing Christians to subject themselves to one another, Paul was not urging them to exercise power over anyone or to yield to the exercise of power over them. Instead, he is asking Christians to voluntarily place themselves below other people, to, as he writes elsewhere, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others as better than yourselves. Let each one of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3 RSV). His purpose here was not to support the lines of authority laid out in patriarchy, but to perpetuate Jesus's revolutionary teachings denying his followers the use of authority or power over other people.[24] In asking Christians to "subject themselves to one another," Paul asked them to opt out of the agonistic struggle for honor, prestige, control, and wealth that characterized Roman culture. Further, he writes that Christians are to do this "in awe (or respect) of Christ," because this is what Jesus himself did, continually placing himself below others, taking on the role of a servant and eventually submitting to a shameful death for the sake of his followers.

Slaves and Masters

To more easily understand how Paul's teachings in Ephesians 5–6 challenged the family structure of the ancient world, I am going to follow Laurence R. Iannaccone's example and start by looking at the most extreme of the power-based relationships: master/slave.[25] Slavery as it was practiced in the Roman world differed in important ways from its later

practice in America. For one thing, Roman slavery was not race-based. Although historically slaves had been war captives, by the first century many slaves had been born into that estate. Others entered slavery more or less voluntarily, selling themselves to pay debts or to obtain one of the high-status jobs that could be held only by slaves. Some entered slavery simply to escape the grinding poverty that was the lot of most freeborn people, as it was often better to be a slave in even a moderately wealthy household than to be a poor freeman.[26] Many slaves earned their freedom after a period of twenty or so years of service; and for some, entering slavery was a calculated attempt to rise in the status hierarchy, as manumitted slaves of Roman citizens became Roman citizens themselves.[27] Slaves could own property, including other slaves, and form families. Furthermore, because their masters dressed them to suit their occupation, it was not readily apparent whether an individual was enslaved or free.

Despite the voluntary nature of slavery for some, slavery was desirable only compared to the alternatives. Neither male nor female slaves had control over their own bodies, and the sexual use of slaves by masters was taken for granted.[28] Masters also held life-and-death authority over them and could kill one summarily. Slaves could not legally marry, and the families they formed could be broken up at the master's pleasure. But slavery was a fundamental social institution in the ancient world and the basis of many business relationships. Indeed, if one was born to a poor family with no social connections, selling oneself into slavery may well have been the best or only way to upward mobility.

The Ephesians 6:5–8 text urges:

> Slaves, obey your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness of heart as to Christ;
> not in way of eye-service as people-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the soul,
> with good will serving as slaves as to the Lord and not to men,
> knowing that whatever good any one does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

Read alone, this passage seems to support the accusation that Paul favored slavery. He seems to be telling slaves not only to obey their masters, but to serve them wholeheartedly, and promising that God would reward them for their servility. However, before accepting this interpretation, consider Paul's very next words: "Masters, do the same to them, and

forbear threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him" (Eph. 6:9).

Paul expected slave owners to "do the same"—to serve their slaves! Significantly, he also wrote that masters should refrain from threatening their slaves. Slaveowners held coercive and economic power over all members of their household. Slaves did their masters' will not from free choice, but to avoid punishment and further their own agendas. Paul directed Christian slave owners to give up the coercive, power-laden aspects of their interactions with their slaves. They must do this because they too had a master who did not coerce them. If God does not treat slaveholders as slaves, Paul wrote, Christian masters must treat their slaves with the same respect that they are shown.

Reconsidering Paul's directive to slaves in light of his instructions to masters, an alternative to the common reading becomes apparent. Paul is drawing a distinction, once again, between living by the flesh and living by the Spirit. He was not commending servility (the world) but urging slaves to opt out of the worldly struggle. Their masters "according to the flesh" may command their labor and must be obeyed, but the enslaved person's "fear and trembling," "singleness of eye," and "service from the soul" can be for the *Lord,* not for their masters. Slaves are no longer to live in fear of their master's coercive power or strive to please their masters to enlarge their own power base (i.e., no longer practice "eye-service as people-pleasers"). In the choice between "bread" and "faith," faith must win. Although legally enslaved and bound to obey their earthly masters, in the spiritual realm they were slaves of Christ; and as they served God from the soul, God would provide for them himself. The bottom line, Paul told both slave and master, is that "he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven," and in that realm one's earthly status of "slave or free" made no difference.[29]

Children and Fathers

In a similar way, at first glance Paul also appears to accept the social order regarding children:

> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
> "Honor your father and mother"—this is the first commandment with a promise:
> "So that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (Eph. 6:1–3)

Note that Paul instructed children to honor and obey their mothers as well as their fathers. In the next passage, however, Paul addressed just the fathers: "Fathers, do not provoke the anger of your children, but bring them up [or nurture them] in the admonition and instruction of the Lord" (v. 4).

In a pre-industrial economy, a major motivation for marriage was to produce children who would serve their fathers—work for them, care for them when sick or aged, increase the family honor, run the family business, etc.[30] Under Roman law, fathers held much the same coercive authority over children that masters exercised over slaves. Fathers could order the abandonment of an unwanted newborn or kill a disobedient child. Further, sons—at least those who wanted their inheritance—remained under their fathers' authority until their fathers died. This meant that fathers had control over their sons as long as they lived (and in later forms of Roman marriage, over their daughters as well.)[31]

As with slaves, Paul asked fathers to give up their coercive rights over their children and the power that came with controlling material resources. The patriarch was not to exercise his superior status over his children to exploit or oppress them ("do not provoke your children to anger" or "do not exasperate your children"). Rather, fathers were to use the obedience their children offered to "bring them up in the admonition and instruction of the Lord." Paul turned around the patriarchal assumption that the purpose of having children was to serve their fathers, and directed fathers to serve their children instead.

And as in Paul's instructions to slaves and masters, he asks for a transformation not just in the fathers' motivation but in those of the children as well. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Obedience and honor are not a matter of doing whatever it takes to keep their parents placated until the father's death released them from that duty. Rather, obedience and honor are a matter of doing right in God's sight—obeying fathers "in the Lord," not because of the laws or customs that kept them in perpetual subordination.

Husbands and Wives, Heads/Bodies

Paul's well-known injunction that "wives submit to their husbands" is not surprising, since the context makes it clear that submission characterizes the entire Christian community. In fact, the instructions to the wife are the last element in a long sentence that begins even before verse

18 where he asks the Christians to "be filled with the spirit," and then explains how: "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father, being subject to one another out of respect for Christ, wives to your own husbands as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18–22).

Thus, seen in context, the injunction "wives to your own husbands" is not a freestanding commandment in a sentence of its own, as it appears in the KJV and as its usual printing in most English Bibles suggests. Some translations even begin a paragraph with a subheading reading something like "The Submission of Wives" between verses 21 and 22 or between 20 and 21. Rather, Paul's instructions for wives are simply another example of the broader point he is making that the Christian community should emulate Christ by refusing to seek status and power over each other. Verse 22 does not even contain a verb but is only a dependent phrase to verse 21: "Submit yourselves to one another." The admonition that wives and, a few verses later, children and slaves, submit "as to the Lord" is a further reminder that they submit themselves out of respect for Christ:[32]

> For the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church, himself the savior of the body.
> But as the church submits itself to Christ, so also wives, in everything, to their husbands. (vv. 23–24)

Just as *hypotasso*, "submit yourself," presents a problem for contemporary readers in understanding what Paul was saying, the English meaning of another word—*kephale* (kef-a-LAY), head—also creates problems. The trouble with understanding what Paul wrote is not the word's translation from Greek into English. *Kephale* is perfectly translated here. It does mean "head," literally, and there is no other way to translate this word into English. Rather, the confusion over its meaning arises because "head" has metaphorical meanings in English that it did not have in first-century Greek. When an English speaker reads "head" in this passage, he or she automatically understands it to mean "ruler," "leader," or "one having authority over," as in the "head" of a corporation. With this understanding of *kephale*, the patriarchal interpretation of Paul's writing flows inevitably: "Wives, submit to your husbands, because he is your ruler, just as Christ is the ruler of the Church."

But *kephale* cannot be translated as "boss" or "ruler" or even as "servant-leader," because, while "head" can mean "authority" in English, it

did not have that connotation in Greek when Paul wrote to the Ephesians.[33] There was another word for "ruler" or one who has the right to tell others what to do: *arche* (ar-KAY). This word is used many times in the New Testament when the writers were designating someone who held authority over others. If Paul had meant "boss" or "leader" in his reference to man as head of the woman, he could have used *arche, kyrios* ("lord," the word used for a slave's master as well as a title often given to Jesus) or *despotis* (the word translated as "lord" in Luke 2:29, Acts 4:24, and Rev. 6:10 or as "master of the household" in Luke 13:25).[34] Any of these three words convey the meaning of "authority over" far better than *kephale*.

Furthermore, "authority over" makes no sense in the context of the rest of the instructions to husbands. As we will see below, in verses 25–33, Paul draws a series of parallels between Christ's expressions of love for the church and a husband's expression of love for his wife. None of these expressions has anything to do with authority or rule.

So if Paul was making a statement about power or authority relations between men and women here, just what did he mean by *kephale?* As Greek scholar Richard Cervin wrote, "He [Paul] does not mean 'authority over' as the traditionalists assert, nor does he mean 'source' as the egalitarians assert. I think he is merely employing a head-body metaphor."[35]

The original readers of Paul's letter to the Ephesians would have understood what he meant by the head/body metaphor because he uses it throughout this letter. In its opening sentences, Paul tells his readers that God's purpose is to unite or bring together all things in heaven and earth in Christ (Eph. 1:10). The word translated "to gather together in one" (KJV), "to unite" (RSV), or "to bring together" (NIV) is literally "to head up" or "to bring several things together under one head."[36] This sense of the "head" uniting, integrating, and nurturing the body is explicit in Ephesians 4:15–16, which the RSV translates as: "We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, *joined and knit together* by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, *makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love*" (emphasis mine).

An earlier part of Paul's letter (Eph. 1:23) is particularly useful in understanding how Paul saw the power relations between the head and body: "[God] has put all things under his [Christ's] feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all." This sentence from earlier in the same letter as the

passage under consideration makes it clear that the relationship between the head and the body is not one of dominance and subordination. The things that are subjected (the word translated as "put . . . under" is *hypotasso* in the active voice) are not "put under" the head, but under the *feet*, that is, below the entire body. The head does not subject the body but reigns together with it: "For all things are yours . . . and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21).

Ephesians 5:23 equates Christ's headship with his role as "savior." In the language of Roman patronage, a savior is someone who provides a great benefit for other people.[37] In other words as Paul uses the term, the husband who is the head of his wife in the same sense that Christ is head of the church does not "rule over" his wife or even "lead" her, but instead serves her, facilitating their unity, growth, and "upbuilding in love." Verses 23–24 read: "For the husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church, himself the savior of the body. But as the church submits itself to Christ, so also wives, in everything, to their husband." This passage is not a rationale on why wives should passively allow themselves to "be [actively] subjected" by their husbands, even though it is often read that way. Rather, it is an assurance that wives no longer have to seek their own self-interest against their husbands, because their husbands' purpose is now to emulate Christ in providing great benefit to them.

Directives to Husbands

Marriages in Greco-Roman culture were, as they were under patriarchy in general, not love matches. Rather, fathers arranged them to promote their own business and political interests. Roman patricians were reluctant to raise more than two children, and few were willing to raise daughters at all. Fathers had the right to decide which of the children born in their households would be raised and which would be given away or, more likely, exposed (abandoned outdoors). Between an unwillingness to raise daughters and a high death rate among women in general, the Roman population sex ratio was greatly skewed, with perhaps as few as seven women to every ten men. Consequently, young girls—averaging ages twelve to fourteen but sometimes as young as eight—were married to men in their late twenties and thirties.[38]

Wives were suspected of giving first allegiance to their family of origin and tended to be viewed with suspicion by their husband's family until they produced a son, at which point, presumably, they shifted their loy-

alties for the sake of their child. Husbands and wives did not expect to be emotionally close. If someone wanted an intimate confidant, he or she was more likely to go to a brother or sister than to a spouse.[39] Divorce and prostitution were rampant, and a long-lived woman of the citizen class might be widowed or divorced and remarried several times.[40]

With this historic background, let us return to Paul's directions to husbands in Ephesians 5:25–33. This passage elaborates on their role as head by continuing to draw on the analogy between Christ's unity with the church and the marriage relationship. Note throughout how he uses the head/body imagery to encourage unity and self-sacrifice rather than to define any kind of marital power hierarchy.

Love

Verse 25 reads: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up on behalf of it." "Love," like "head," is a word into which English speakers in our century read too much. Greek had three words that are translated "love," and none of them meant the complex emotion we call romantic love today. *Eros* was erotic love; *philos* love for a brother or sister; and *agape,* the word used here, meant caring concern for another person.

When Paul told men to "love" their wives, he was not talking as someone at a modern marriage retreat might, instructing couples on how to rekindle romance. Rather, he was telling men to treat their wives with *agape*: selfless, caring concern. In urging that a man care about his wife as he does himself, Paul seriously challenged patriarchal motives for marriage (v. 28), in which men took wives chiefly to serve their own needs for a legitimate heir and for household management.

Giving Yourself Up

The passage continues through verse 30:

> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loves the church and gave himself up for her [26] in order that he might sanctify her [the church], cleansing her with the washing of the water of the word, [27] so as to present the church to himself in glory, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but in order that it might be holy and unblemished.
>
> [28] In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
>
> [29] For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and cher-

ishes it, just as Christ does for the church, [30] because we are members of his body.

Paul thus enjoined husbands to emulate Christ in sacrificing themselves for their wives, treating their wives with the same respect that they have for themselves. Here he used the same imagery that he used only a little earlier in Ephesians 4:16—of Christ as head nourishing the church in order to upbuild it in love. In the same way, husbands are to nourish and cherish their wives—to help them to grow in love.

Note that the kinds of behavior Paul advocated here were far from being typical male roles. The Roman man was expected to be virile, dominant, and "macho." "Nourishing and cherishing" were not typical "guy" behaviors in the first century. And remember that Paul was asking men in their late twenties or thirties to love and care for someone as insignificant as a twelve-year-old girl just because she was his wife.

Paul's next statement quotes the creation account in Genesis 2:

> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."
> This is a great mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:31–32)

In patriarchy, it is women who expected to leave their parents and become part of their husbands' families. Roman wives literally moved in with the husband's family. In contrast, while Paul here required adult children to continue to honor their parents "in the Lord," he stated quite clearly that a husband's primary allegiance in the household is not to his parents but to his wife. This attitude represented a radical challenge to ancient patriarchy, which demanded that an adult child's loyalty *always* lie first with his family of origin.[41]

The Response of Wives

In completing his instructions to husbands, Paul added another admonition to wives: ". . . each of you should love his wife as himself and a wife should respect her husband" (v. 33). Readers of this passage often ask why husbands are enjoined to "love," while wives must "respect," a word which seems to assume male superiority. Further, why did Paul designate the husband and not the wife as head?

Perhaps this is because the things that Paul asked husbands to do—to love another as they loved themselves, to upbuild another person, to nur-

ture, serve, and cherish—were feminine roles. Service was expected of wives and mothers. A wife might not love her husband romantically, but "caring concern" was her job. Her care had no particularly Christian meaning, because even the pagans expected her to devote herself to her husband and children.

But for a husband to do these things? In a patriarchal culture, a woman of any ethnic background might well think less respectfully of a man who began treating his household in the ways that Paul described. A wife's own prestige and material well-being depended on her husband's performance of his gender-stereotyped role. Marriages in the time when Paul was writing were arranged matches, set by contract. Although emotionally the beneficiary of a man's renunciation of the role of patriarch, a wife could well consider it shameful for a powerful man to turn down the power and privilege to which he—and she as his wife—was entitled. A Christian man, however, would have a difficult time following Paul's instructions if his wife withdrew her respect for him.

Paul asked husbands to sacrifice everything they had been raised to expect in a macho, agonistic culture that valued status, public praise, competition, winning, and position above all else. The sacrifice they are asked to make explains why he placed the husband, not the wife, parallel with Christ in the head/body metaphor. When Paul asked wives to respect their husbands, he uses the same word he used at the beginning of the passage to refer to the Christian's attitude toward Christ. Wives were to respect (*phobos*) their husbands, just as Christians were to submit to each other out of respect (*phobos)* for Christ. Historically, conservative Christian theologians have argued that, since Christ is superior to the church, this parallel between Christ and the husband implies that Paul assumed the husbands' status to be superior to that of their wives.[42] But although the church should delight to serve Christ, Jesus's ministry made it clear that he came, first and foremost, "not to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). Paul here encourages Christians to relinquish their claims to hierarchical status out of their respect for Christ who, as Paul wrote elsewhere, "though he was in the form of God, counted not equality with God a thing to be seized (or stolen), but emptied himself, *taking on the form of a slave*" (Phil. 2:6; emphasis mine).

Spiritual Capital

As New Testament scholar Gordon Fee wrote about another passage

of Paul's, Galatians 3:28 ("There is no Jew nor Gentile; no slave nor free; no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"): "Such a revolutionary statement was not intended to abolish the structures [of Roman society], which were held in place by Roman law. Rather, it was intended forever to do away with the significance attached to such structural differences, which pitted one group of human beings against another."[43] This passage in Ephesians performs exactly the same function. The admonition to "submit to one another out of respect for Christ" was intended to *destroy hierarchy and privilege* and bring about the *unity* of the entire Christian community.

These injunctions, together with the teachings of Jesus and other New Testament writers, demanded a revolutionary, even frightening, change in the way believers were to treat each other. This change offers one of the strongest examples of the benefits of "spiritual capital," a notion being promoted by the John Templeton Foundation, a nonprofit organization that makes grants to promote the study of religion. Spiritual capital is a concept analogous to "social capital" as explicated by James Coleman and Robert Putnam.[44] Social capital builds on the idea of "human capital," the concept that individuals and societies have a stockpile of resources consisting of individuals' knowledge and skills.

Spiritual capital refers to the particular human capital that is motivated or shaped by religious or moral beliefs. Spiritual capital enables the adherents of a particular religious or moral system to behave according to its norms (the "spirit") *despite* the fact that these norms deviate from the behaviors and practices rewarded by the economic and social structure in which these people are embedded (the "flesh"). Spiritual capital enables a society to maintain values, behaviors, and practices that transcend ordinary economic incentives, such as refusing to hold slaves even when doing so proves profitable or staying to care for the victims of plague when everyone else is running away. As Rodney Stark has shown, although this kind of spiritually motivated behavior means sacrificing one's self-interest, it can yield benefits for groups and entire societies in the long run.[45]

Within this framework, an economic model of the family helps us understand why the first-century family looked the way it did. But just because a practice or attitude is economically viable (or even economically "efficient") does not mean that it is good. Becker notes that, for families struggling with scarcity, the unequal provision of resources to boys, even to the point of killing newborn girls, is rational,[46] but he does not there-

fore claim that it is good. "Indeed," writes Laurence R. Iannaccone, a student of Becker's, "economists like Becker routinely emphasize that they are engaged in a form of 'positive' economics that *deliberately* sidesteps 'normative' issues. (Whether they succeed is, of course, a subject of heated debate.) The point to keep in mind is that even the most enthusiastic 'Beckerian' economist—i.e., Becker himself—does not equate efficiency with morality."[47]

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul made it clear that Christians are supposed to be living by a different standard than they had in the past. In a materially driven culture, men strive for honor, prestige, dominance, power, and wealth, things that are in short supply. But Paul (as well as Jesus, the Apostle Peter, and others whose teachings are captured in the New Testament) taught that Christians did not have to strive for those things. God had already and would continue to care for them himself, if they lived by faith in him rather than in the worldly status hierarchy. Note that in this passage, mutual submission is a direct manifestation of "giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" for this all-sustaining munificence. Paul radically redefines the believers' motives, shifting their decision-making from one based on secular competition for scarce worldly resources to one based on the infinite resources available to those who live by the Spirit.

These teachings had a profound effect over time, transforming the structure and interpersonal patterns within the ancient family. Christianity forbade the exposure of infants or abortion, which under Roman law could be ordered by men and which often disabled or killed the pregnant woman. It raised the age of marriage for girls, raised the status of women in general, disallowed the sexual double standard, required both husbands and wives to be monogamous, outlawed polygamy, opposed and ultimately eliminated slavery, put slaves and women into leadership positions in the church, allowed marital separation in the interest of peace but discouraged divorce, and encouraged people to remain single if they so chose. As Rodney Stark demonstrates in *The Rise of Christianity,* a significant factor in the explosive growth of the early Christian movement was that it treated women so well. A proper appreciation of the early Christian view of marriage must begin by contrasting it with the corrupt family practices of the culture in which it was embedded. Within that culture, Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians 7 that a person, especially a woman, did not have to marry was both revolutionary and liberating.

Although inescapable economic and technological limits continued to constrain families and the sexual division of labor until after the Industrial Revolution, the Christianized family differed dramatically from the *familia* of the Greco-Roman world. The so-called "traditional, patriarchal" Victorian family that provided so much fodder for mid-twentieth-century feminist critiques (including that of the poet quoted in the introduction) was neither traditional nor patriarchal when compared to the practices that preceded Christianity.

Patriarchy or Gender Equality?

The title of this paper posed the question whether New Testament teachings are patriarchal or egalitarian. My conclusion about the patriarchal half of the question should be clear. The early Christian leaders opposed patriarchy, slavery, male domination, or any attempts to control or exercise power over other people, even in marriage. But were they gender equalitarians? Certainly equality of all kinds (race, class, *and* gender, according to Galatians 3:28) lies at the heart of Christian practice, but I don't find much evidence that achieving equality in itself was the *goal* of early Christian leaders. Rather, the equal and caring treatment of all believers, Jew or gentile, slave or free, male and female, was seen as one of many ingredients necessary to achieve the ultimate eschatology of union of the church with Christ.

This definition of equality would not satisfy a secular feminist, nor would secular feminism please an early Christian. In fact, the perspective promoted in Ephesians might denounce mid-twentieth century's secular liberation movements as more evidence of the "worldly" struggle for power. As believers strive to live lives that reflect an "awe of Christ," gender equality means nothing unless it is joined with submission—the abandonment of striving to exercise power over each other. In this sense, New Testament Christianity sought to create a world that relied upon the transformative capacity of living by the Spirit and, hence, one that material considerations alone can neither explain nor sustain.

Notes

1. Some scholars argue that Ephesians was not written by Paul himself, but by someone writing in his name. However, the discussion of who really wrote Ephesians is irrelevant here. Regardless of authorship, Ephesians is part of the biblical canon. Without engaging in that controversy, I will refer to Paul as its author.

2. S. Scott Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy: The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 29, no. 2 (1999): 68–78.

3. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

4. In a great many societies, such as in much of Asia, couples did not go out on their own but joined a preexisting, extended household.

5. Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 64.

6. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776; reprinted, New York: Modern Library, 1937), 70–71.

7. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Birth Rate: Total and for Women 15–44 Years Old," *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975).

8. Table 93, "Characteristics of Women Who Have Had a Child in the Last Year, 1995–1998," *Statistical Abstract of the United States,* retrieved on December 2005 from www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/statab/sec02.pdf. Uganda data from http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/ ug/Uganda_people.htm.

9. Becker, *Treatise on the Family,* 38; all of chap. 2.

10. When looms became heavy pieces of equipment that were rented for limited periods of time ca. eighteenth century, men did the weaving.

11. Ruth Bleier, *Science and Gender: A Critique of Biology and Its Theories on Women* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984); Becker, *Treatise on the Family,* 43 note 6.

12. Karen Sacks, *Sisters and Wives: The Past and Future of Sexual Equality* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 93.

13. Although I'm not sure that Becker draws this conclusion in so many words, it is easy to deduce from his book. This line of reasoning is analogous to economic analyses of "firm-specific" versus general human capital. See also Margaret F. Brinig and Douglas W. Allen, "'These Boots Are Made for Walking': Why Most Divorce Filers Are Women," *American Law and Economics Association* 2, no. 1 (2000): 126–69.

14. A friend from Idaho tells a story about her parents that illustrates the possibility for struggles over cash. Her parents were cattle ranchers who depended on the annual sale of cattle for the next year's supply of cash. One year when the money came in, my friend's father got to it first and lost the entire year's profits gambling. His wife was furious. The next year, she got hold of the money first and bought herself a fur coat.

15. Even sexual dysmorphism, the tendency for males of many species to be bigger than females, makes more sense when seen in terms of feminine rather than masculine needs. Men are not larger than women because they need to be stronger to protect them; women are smaller than men to preserve scarce calories

for the requirements of pregnancy and nursing rather than supporting body mass.

16. Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy"; David deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

17. Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 76; S. Scott Bartchy, *First Century Slavery and I Corinthians 7:2* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 58; Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 151–56.

18. Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 167–68; David L. Balch, "Household Codes," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament,* edited by David E. Aune, Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study, No. 21 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25.

19. Balch, "Household Codes," 26–29. Since this letter's earliest manuscript, it has been attributed to Paul. The Christian congregation to whom it is addressed lived in Ephesus, an ethnically mixed Greco-Roman city in modern Turkey. In the contemporary controversy about gender roles among evangelical Christians, the "traditionalists" or "complementarians" (as opposed to Christian feminists or equalitarians) have used Ephesians 5 and 6 to support the notion of the "chain of command" (with God over man, man over his wife, and the couple together over their children), an idea with which the Greeks and Romans would have been comfortable.

20. All citations from this point on of Ephesians 5 and 6 in this article are my own translation, based on Alfred Marshall, *The RSV Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975).

21. Andrew Christensen and Neil S. Jacobson, *Reconcilable Differences* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 124.

22. For example, the Revised Standard Version of Ephesians 1:22 translates a passage containing *hypotasso:* "And he has *put* all things *under* his feet."

23. F. Kinchin Smith and T. W. Melluish, *Greek,* Teach Yourself Books (series) (London: St. Paul's House, 1972), 128.

24. S. Scott Bartchy, "Jesus, Power, and Gender Roles," Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, Summer 1994; audiocassette SL94–190 in my possession.

25. I draw heavily on Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Women and the Word of God," 1980, unpublished typescript, for his insightful analysis of the slave/master, child/father, wife/husband relationships.

26. Bartchy, *First Century Slavery and I Corinthians 7:21,* 47.

27. Ibid. Bartchy recounts the story of the heir to the throne of a tributary kingdom voluntarily entering slavery because it was better to be a Roman citizen than king of a lesser realm.

28. A common pagan practice was to "expose" or abandon unwanted infants.

Many of these children died, but some were picked up by slave traders and raised as slaves. Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World,* 65; and Bartchy, *First Century Slavery and I Corinthians 7:21,* 45. Prostitution was a common fate of these children.

29. Elsewhere Paul instructs Christians not to sell themselves into slavery (1 Cor. 7:23), equates slave traders with murderers (1 Tim. 1:9–11), and strongly urges a Christian master to free his slave and accept him back as a brother (Philemon).

30. Bartchy, "Jesus, Power, and Gender Roles."

31. Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy," 68.

32. This ambiguous phrase has been interpreted a number of ways. For example, Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World,* 184, believe that Paul was telling wives and slaves to submit to their master as if he were the Lord. Finding this directive unacceptable and inconsistent with Paul's other writings, they therefore dismiss the letter to the Ephesians as the work of a "deutero-Paul," i.e., a false Paul who wrote in imitation of the original.

33. Richard Cervin, "Does *kephale* (Head) Mean 'Source' or 'Authority over' in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal," *Trinity Journal* 10, NS 1 (1989). *Kephale* appears to have acquired this metaphorical meaning of "ruler" later, although Cervin notes that, while a modern Greek speaker agreed that *kephale* could mean "top authority" in modern Greek, he thought it sounded "a little funny." Ibid., 19 note 29.

34. Brian Neuschwander, "Women as 'Master of the House,'" *Priscilla Papers* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2000), retrieved on December 2005 from http://www.equalitydepot.com/browseproducts/Priscilla-Papers-Volume-14–Issue-3.html.

35. Cervin, "Does *kephale* (Head) Mean," 19.

36. Heinrich Schlier, "Anakephalaiomai," in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* edited by Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964), 681–82.

37. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship, and Culture,* 140–41, writes, "The tendency of New Testament authors to speak of Jesus as 'Savior' is also in keeping with his role as benefactor, for the term was applied as an honorary term to great and powerful figures who brought a city deliverance from an enemy, provided famine relief and removed other threats to the well-being and stability of a group of people."

38. "J. C. Russell (1958) estimated that there were 131 males per 100 females in the city of Rome, and 140 males per 100 females in Italy, Asia Minor, and North Africa." Quoted in Stark, *The Rise of Christianity,* 97; see also 105.

39. Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy," 68. Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 65, 73, 83, notes that many affectionate letters between Ro-

man husbands and wives have survived (82) but that the "emphasis on mutual harmony and love in Rome was nothing like the mutuality that most modern people expect in marriage," a fact that Coontz partially attributes to the widespread acceptance of promiscuity on the part of husbands (82). She cites a funeral oration in which a widower acknowledges that long marriages ended by death rather than divorce were rare (80). See also Stark, *The Rise of Christianity,* 122. Stark cites Roman censor Quintus Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, who noted that many men resisted marriage, as "we cannot have a really harmonious life with our wives." Stark then quotes Beryl Rawson: "One theme that recurs in Latin literature is that wives are difficult and therefore men do not care much for marriage" (117). For the contrasting and overriding importance of ties between siblings in Rome, see David DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 166–70.

40. See Stark, *The Rise of Christianity,* 117 (prostitution); 104 (pressure on widows to remarry); Coontz, *Marriage: A History,* 65, 80 (frequency of divorce and remarriage); J.P.V.D Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (New York, Barnes and Noble Books, 1962) (on ease of divorce in late Roman Republic); Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World,* 62 (commonness of divorce). Augustus passed laws forcing widows and divorced women to remarry or face substantial fines. Balsdon, *Roman Women,* 221.

41. Bartchy, "Undermining Ancient Patriarchy," 68; Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World,* 57. The absolute right of fathers (*patria potestas*) was a fundamental principle of Roman law. See also Coontz, *Marriage: A History,* 78 (on fathers' discretion to raise or expose a newborn). She continues: "Sons as well as daughters remained under their father's power until he died. So did *their* sons and daughters. A man gained the rights of a father only after his own father died. The word *familia* encompassed everyone under the patriarch's authority or attached to his household. It even included slaves and freedmen who bore the family names of their former owner" (79). The patrician heads of households "were not *in* families; they ruled *over* them" (79). A marriage entered into without the father's consent was not valid (79).

42. For examples of such reasoning, see Wayne Gruden and others associated with the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, www.cbmw.org. See also their book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,* edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossways Books, 1991).

43. Gordon D. Fee, "The Cultural Context of Ephesians 5:18–6:9," *Priscilla Papers* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 7.

44. James Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology,* 94 (July 1988): 95–120; and Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

45. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity,* in general, esp. 74–75, 165, 212. However, Laurence R. Iannaccone in a personal conversation, pointed out that one problem with the "spiritual capital" is that "spiritual" encompasses an overly broad range of behaviors and practices. I once read a magazine article on women's use of time that classified activities such as gardening, reading, or going to the movies as "spiritual" pursuits. English speakers often use "spiritual" to mean the opposite of physical or material, but such a definition is impossible to operationalize. For "spiritual capital" to have a beneficial effect, content must matter. After all, it is not as if the Romans did not hold spiritual values or have morals. The obedience of all members of a family to the patrician was the height of Roman morality. In the New Testament, however, "the Spirit" refers solely to God's spirit. This is a much narrower range of "spiritual goods."

46. Becker, *A Treatise on the Family,* 192–94.

47. Laurence R. Iannaccone, private correspondence, 2005.