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## “Holy Wives” in Roman Households: 1 Peter 3:1-6

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Unknown artist, *Praying woman*. Catacomb of Calixtus, Rome, ca. early 4th c.  
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### **“Holy Wives” in Roman Households: 1 Peter 3:1-6<sup>1</sup>**

Near the year 170 C.E., an intellectual named Celsus aimed the following criticism at Christianity:

Their injunctions are like this. “Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone uneducated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly.” By the fact that they themselves admit that these people are worthy of their God, they show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonorable and stupid, and only slaves, women and little children.<sup>2</sup>

The charge that Christians were open to, even welcoming of, people of lower status in the Roman empire—the uneducated, children, slaves, and women—is a familiar one in the first few centuries of Christian history. Although these accusations serve polemical arguments, they are also founded in Christian practices.<sup>3</sup> Our earliest Christian literature, the letters of Paul, illustrate

that there were people from all walks of life in the earliest communities of believers, including women, children, slaves and uneducated people.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, Christianity did not start out as a civic cult with a public presence, as it would become in the fourth century. Rather, it took hold among households and grew piecemeal over the next three centuries. During this time, households served as venues for meeting, teaching and practicing Christian rituals. Indeed, the networks of households were far-reaching and, according to some, full of evangelizing potential. One way this worked is reported by the Acts of the Apostles: the head of the household, persuaded by a Christian teacher, would convert to Christianity and the whole household would follow suit (Acts 11:14; 16:14-15, 31-34; 18:8). This pattern conforms to the cultural expectation that subordinate members of a household would follow the religious allegiances of the head of the household, who was usually male.<sup>5</sup>

Other times, however, believers expressed the hope that Christianity might sneak in through the back door, through one of the subordinate members of the household, like slaves or wives, precisely those derided by Celsus. One such author, writing pseudonymously at the end of the first century C.E., has this situation in mind. In 1 Peter, a letter written in Peter's name to Christians in Asia Minor, the author singles out slaves (2:18-25) and wives (3:1-6) in particular and counsels both to be obedient to their masters and husbands. In this essay I will focus on the advice to wives, especially the following verses: "Likewise you wives: be subordinate to your husbands, so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your reverent and chaste conduct" (1 Peter 3:1-2).<sup>6</sup> The author addresses a situation in which Christian women are married to non-Christian men and advises submission and good behavior.<sup>7</sup>

This is an intriguing passage in that it assumes a wife's agency precisely in her subservience. The author highlights the potential influence of wives, encouraging them to be ambassadors, if mute ones, for their new faith. From her subordinate position, a wife might still wield some influence over her husband's religious allegiance. Yet this advice is complicated because, in a Greco-Roman domestic context, obedience to a husband included the worship of his gods. To refuse to do so might be seen as insubordination. How then, would a Christian wife in the first or second century respond to this injunction to "be subordinate to" her pagan husband? What agency does she have in this situation?

I propose that we can say something about what that agency is by thinking about how women may have responded to this difficult advice. My goal in this essay is to explore this proposal, first by describing Roman-period households, especially with respect to the interaction between religious practices and power, and then by analyzing the advice to wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6. Finally, I will look at other Christian texts to help reconstruct some options for Christian wives, and to suggest how they might have been empowered even in their vulnerable situation.

### **Roman-Period Households**

To understand the social context for the advice to wives in 1 Peter, it is important to understand the household in the Roman period. Unlike modern homes, which are generally understood to be private spaces for families, often separate from work, ancient households were economic units themselves. Whether through agriculture or the production of other goods, households were a crucial part of the economy. Wealthier households might have shops attached to the physical structure of the house, where household members—perhaps slaves or other dependents—would work, manufacturing and selling wares to the public. Women and girls were

often responsible for weaving cloth to supply the family or to be sold at the market. The head of the household would conduct business in the household itself, receiving visitors, holding meetings and exchanging services.<sup>8</sup>

In Roman houses, much of this activity took place in a central room called the *atrium*, a space that was open to many other rooms and hallways. Thus, the business of the house could take place in full view of other household members moving about the space.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, there were often no fixed doors closing off the household from the street, so that even passersby could catch a glimpse of the activities of the household. Parts of the household, therefore, were on public display, so that the inside of the house—both the physical space and the interactions of people—signaled to those outside something about the householders: their wealth, religious commitments, taste in art, the stature of their visitors, and so on. People passing by might notice mosaics on the floor, paintings on the walls, fountains in the courtyard, shrines to particular gods, slaves attending the family, as well as business associates and other guests visiting. Each of these demonstrated the status of the head of the household.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear even from this brief description of Roman-period households that the members comprise more than just the immediate family. In addition to parents and children, a large household might include extended family members, slaves, teachers, nurses, staff to work in the fields or shops, and other dependents whose work relates to the activities of the household.<sup>11</sup>

In part because of the wide range of human activity that occurred in the household, as well as the variety of people with different status positions who lived there, the ancient household was considered to be a microcosm of the larger society. The Roman Empire was an intensely hierarchical society, with the emperor occupying the top position and everyone else taking lower-status positions, based largely on birth and gender, from elite senators to the poorest

slaves. The household, at least in its ideal form according to Roman writers, is like an empire writ small: the head of the household, usually a free male, ruled over the other household members subordinate to him.

In political and moral literature in the Roman world, this ideal household is used as a paradigm for how the city or state should run.<sup>12</sup> In this discourse, called "household management," political leaders are compared to heads of households, who are good managers of the people and activity they oversee. Indeed, the well-run patriarchal household embodied many core Roman ideals: efficiency, order, productivity, honor of family, properly ordered social relationships, and reverence to the gods. Household management begins with Greek philosophers and proves useful well into the Roman Empire, when Christians, too, adopt the household model for their own communities. As I will discuss further below, 1 Peter participates in this same type of moralizing discourse.<sup>13</sup>

### **Religion and Power in the Household**

Another important feature of ancient households, and one that may contrast with our modern understanding of domestic settings, is that religious practices are woven into daily household activities. In the Roman world, most people worshipped many gods, each of whom was responsible for a particular facet of life. In addition to the gods that governed civic life, there were gods specifically responsible for households. These included ancestral gods, gods of the pantry, gods of boundary markers, gods of specific trades, gods of fertility, and so on.<sup>14</sup> Just as larger communities worshipped the gods that protected cities or neighborhoods, household members worshipped the gods of their particular household.

Evidence from both literary and material sources indicates that domestic ritual practices were incorporated into daily activities such as eating meals.<sup>15</sup> Prayers and offerings of food and drink might be made to the gods before meals. Other rituals marked special occasions, like someone's birthday. In the first century B.C.E., the poet Tibullus describes a celebration of a birthday of a daughter, Sulpicia:

Juno of the birthday, receive the holy piles of incense which the accomplished maid's soft hand now offers you. Today she has bathed for you; most joyfully she has decked herself for you, to stand before your altar a sight for all to see...She is making an offering to you, holy goddess, three times with cake and three times with wine, and the mother eagerly enjoins upon her child what she must pray for" (3.12.1-4, 14-15).<sup>16</sup>

In this scene we can imagine the daughter and mother standing before the household altar, probably with the other household members around them, with the mother coaching the daughter in her prayers. Offerings of incense, cakes and wine accompany the child's prayers.

The archaeological record tells us that there were spaces dedicated to the gods in many households. These could be paintings, niches in the wall, or even small shrines which imitated the architecture of civic temples. Statuettes and cultic objects were often placed in the niches or shrines.<sup>17</sup> In the western part of the Empire, *Lares* and *Penates* were common occupants of household shrines. *Lares* are sometimes associated with boundary markers of the property and sometimes with ancestors of the head of the household. *Penates*, often described as "gods of the pantry," could encompass a wide variety of gods, also sometimes associated with ancestors.<sup>18</sup> We also have evidence of domestic practices outside of the Italian peninsula, such as Egypt, Gaul, Greece and Turkey.<sup>19</sup> While religious activity in households seems to have been ubiquitous in the Roman Empire, material evidence indicates that there is little uniformity from house to house. It seems that each household crafted its own collection of deities to worship, depending on its particular needs.<sup>20</sup> In large households we sometimes find multiple shrines, suggesting the

possibility of diverse worship practices, and perhaps multiple groupings of worshipers, within a single household.<sup>21</sup>

Through the worship of the gods, the household members sought to tap into divine power for the prosperity of the household. Because the gods made good and bad things happen in life, it was crucial to seek their favor through offerings of plants and animals, often the products of the labor of the household members. In turn, the acting out of these ritual practices in the home reinscribed the human power dynamics of the patriarchal household in that the subordinate members of the household were expected to worship the gods of the head of the household. Indeed, being a part of a household as a slave, dependent, child or wife, meant obedience and loyalty to the gods of the master/father/husband.<sup>22</sup> Sometimes these included the gods of his ancestors and sometimes these included his "*genius*," which might be described as his divine spirit or personification.<sup>23</sup> The *genius* was honored on the birthday of the head of the household and participation in this ritual expressed loyalty to him.

Sources often portray the subordinate members, slaves and wives, as responsible for preparing and carrying out household rituals, even as the husband or master is perceived to be the one to oversee these activities. In a scene from Plautus's comedy, *Trinummus*, Callicles calls to his wife: "I want our *Lar* to be decorated with a garland. Wife, pray so that the *Lar* may raise this dwelling up to be upright, happy, fortunate and prosperous for us" (lines 39-42).<sup>24</sup> And in a passage from *Rudens* by the same playwright, the head of the household orders his wife: "...prepare things for me to make an offering to the household gods when I return home, since they have augmented our household. We have lambs and pigs for sacrifice at home" (lines 1206-1208).<sup>25</sup> In both of these examples, the wife takes orders from the husband; he orders the rites and she sees that they are carried out. Although embedded in comedy, which often turns



traditional values upside-down, these examples reflect broader cultural assumptions about the roles of husbands and wives.

In Cato's second-century- B.C.E. farming manual, *de Agricultura*, these assumptions are explicitly articulated. The hierarchical structure of the household, in this case a country estate, is laid out in Cato's prescription of the religious practices. He instructs the bailiff, or slave in charge of the property, that he is to oversee his female counterpart, who is responsible for cleaning and decorating the hearth for holidays and praying to the household gods (*de Agricultura* 143.2). Cato warns, however, that the slave woman is not to initiate rituals herself; she is to respond to the instructions of the *dominus*, the head of household, or his wife (143.1). "Let [the slave woman] remember," Cato admonishes, "that the *dominus* attends to the worship for the whole household" (143.1).<sup>26</sup> These examples illustrate how the religious practices of the household were understood to enact domestic power relationships. Slaves and wives were active participants in soliciting the favor of the gods on behalf of the household, but they were expected to do so under the direction of those above them.

If Cato's instructions communicate certain expectations about religious practices and power relationships in the household, they also betray a concern that these were not always fulfilled. Slaves and wives may indeed have initiated their own religious observances, perhaps to their own gods, without the consent of the head of household. We can imagine that both groups might import their own gods, perhaps from their original households, into their current house.<sup>27</sup> Cato's concerns echo those of others in the Roman period, who warn against foreign deities and unsupervised worship, both of which were associated with the subversion of proper hierarchies.<sup>28</sup> Plutarch's well-known admonition to wives encapsulates this attitude: "A married woman should therefore worship and recognize the gods whom her husband holds dear, and these alone. The

door must be closed to strange cults and foreign superstitions. No god takes pleasure in cult performed furtively and in secret by a woman."<sup>29</sup> These warnings are a good indication that unsanctioned worship probably was taking place among household members and that it was a problem, at least for some.

### **Wives as Silent Evangelists: 1 Peter 3:1-6**

The advice in 1 Peter addresses the same wives Plutarch has in mind: those who are interested in gods foreign to the household and to the husband. In this case, the foreign deity is the God of this new cult, known now as "the Christians."<sup>30</sup> The author writes to these women:

(1) Likewise you wives: be subordinate to (*hypotassomenai*) your husbands, so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, (2) when they observe your reverent and chaste conduct. (3) Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding [your] hair, putting on gold ornaments, and wearing fine clothing; (4) but rather let your adornment be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable [adornment] of a gentle and tranquil spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. (5) For thus also the holy wives of old who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, being subordinate to their husbands (6) as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You became her children, now doing what is right and "not fearing any terror." (1 Peter 3:1-6)

This advice to wives married to non-believers is a part of a series of instructions to various members in the household. The phrase "in the same way" (3:1), refers back to the previous section, in which the author addresses slaves: "You household slaves, be subordinate to (*hypotassomenai*) your masters with all reverence" (2:18).<sup>31</sup> The author uses the same verb, "be subordinate to," for both wives and slaves, and each group receives a series of instructions related to this central theme of submission to the head of the household.

This section comprising instructions to slaves (2:18-25) and to wives (3:1-6), along with a shorter admonition to husbands (3:7), is one of several "household codes" in the New Testament. These codes, which adapt the moral discourse of "household management," belong to

Christian texts from the late-first and early-second centuries C.E., and show how Christians explicitly model their communities after traditional Roman hierarchies, specifically the household. In the household codes in Ephesians (5:21-6:9) and Colossians (3:18-4:1), the authors use a typical three-pronged structure, which addresses relationships between the head of the household (who is assumed to be a free male) and three subordinate positions in the household: slaves, wife and children.<sup>32</sup> The author addresses slaves and masters, wives and husbands, children and fathers, each in turn, following a long tradition of exhortation aimed at household members in the Greek and Roman world.<sup>33</sup>

It is striking in 1 Peter, then, that the author addresses slaves at some length, but not masters. And then he addresses wives at some length, but only offers a sentence to husbands.<sup>34</sup> This author seems particularly concerned with Christians who are in the vulnerable position of being subordinate members of unbelieving households. The instructions to slaves in 2:18-25 are dominated by the theme of enduring suffering, even at the hands of a “harsh” master (2:18). Although the text is not explicit, most scholars assume that the author has in mind non-Christian masters. In the section addressed to wives, author makes clear that he has non-Christian husbands in mind, those who “disobey the word” (3:1). There is no explicit mention of suffering, but there is perhaps an implicit allusion to the threat of violence in the closing admonition not to fear any terror (3:6).

Why does this author focus on slaves and wives? One explanation is that they serve as models for all the Christians addressed by the letter.<sup>35</sup> A central concern in 1 Peter is the behavior of believers among unbelievers who have persecuted members of the community: “Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge” (2:12).<sup>36</sup>

We are never told exactly how the believers are "maligned," but the author repeatedly discusses how to respond to persecution. "Beloved," the author writes, "do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ's sufferings..." (4:12-13a). The author calls his readers "aliens and exiles" (2:11), but also a "chosen lineage, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people..." (2:9). Insiders and outsiders stand in stark contrast to each other and, ironically, the insiders are the aliens.

Christian slaves and wives in non-Christian households represent exactly this position. Because they worship a new and foreign god, they are "aliens" in their households, and vulnerable to the censure and violent reactions of masters and husbands. Slaves and wives, like Christians generally, would do well to ease the tensions with those outside the group by complying to traditional societal hierarchies. Thus the author advises readers to "be subordinate to every human institution" (2:13), just as he advises wives and slaves to "be subordinate" to masters and husbands.<sup>37</sup>

Another possible (and not mutually exclusive) reason for the author's focus on wives and slaves is that these groups are the source of the problem in the first place.<sup>38</sup> That is, it is the refusal of Christian wives and slaves to worship household gods that originally triggered persecution and slander against the community. As we saw above, a crucial component of belonging to a household was to show obedience and loyalty to the head of the household by worshipping his gods, the very gods that protected the household, prevented illness, ensured the production of crops or goods, brought healthy children to the family, and so on. Discourses on proper household behavior in the ancient world were often deployed when societal or household order was threatened by the worship of new or foreign gods.<sup>39</sup> Here, too, this household code

serves as an intervention in this disruptive situation, but on behalf of those who worship the new God.

The advice directed to wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6 explicitly addresses the issue of religious conflict in the household, acknowledging that some wives have husbands who “disobey the word” (v. 1). This phrasing indicates at least that these husbands are not Christians, and perhaps also that they deliberately antagonize those who are.<sup>40</sup> The author asks wives “to be subordinate” even to these husbands, emulating the “holy wives” of Israel’s history.

It is likely that non-Christian husbands would have agreed with most of the advice offered here. Roman-period moralists regularly espouse the virtues of obedience, silence and chaste behavior in wives.<sup>41</sup> The advice about adornment, including the contrast between the inner self and outer self is also typical in discourses about female modesty and virtue in the Roman world.<sup>42</sup> The author links this conventional advice to a Christian perspective in the second half of the passage by mentioning the “imperishable...gentle and tranquil spirit” which is precious to God (v. 4), and the “holy wives” who adorned themselves by being subordinate to their husbands (v. 5). Sarah provides a specific example, obeying Abraham and calling him “lord” (*kyrios*), a term which implies authority over or ownership of others.<sup>43</sup> Christian wives are now the daughters of Sarah, not only because of their conversion to Christianity and inheritance of the promises made to the patriarchs and matriarchs, but also, perhaps more importantly here, because of their submission to their husbands.<sup>44</sup>

Yet the author does not solely reinscribe the traditional structure of the household; he also encourages them to “win over” their husbands through their “reverent and chaste conduct” (vv. 1-2). This advice places wives in an intriguing position. They are encouraged to be obedient to husbands, conforming to Roman household values, yet they are also told that, precisely in their

subordinate roles, they might yield some persuasive influence, not with words but with actions. According to this author, Christian wives are potentially silent evangelists.<sup>45</sup> 1 Peter 3:1-6 is striking in that it simultaneously reinforces patriarchal control of non-Christian husband *and* empowers the Christian wife in her submission.

This advice is a compelling point of departure for imagining the roles of wives in patriarchal households. Embedded in the command to obey is a tacit admission of the agency of subordinate members of the household, especially with respect to religious practices. Catherine Bell refers to this dynamic as "redemptive hegemony."<sup>46</sup> This concept acknowledges that religious rituals are embedded in and contribute to a complex set of power relationships that not only reinscribe the authority of the powerful, but also involve the consent, and potentially the resistance, of those with less power. "Redemptive hegemony" refers to the ability ritual actors have, regardless of their status, to "reproduce or reconfigure a vision of the order of power in the world,"<sup>47</sup> not necessarily to overthrow the whole order, but to claim some limited agency within that order. Christian wives, like other wives bringing their own gods into households (as Plutarch mentions), or slaves initiating their own rites in a country estate (as Cato mentions), might resist the control of husbands and reconfigure power in the household, even if quietly.

Yet this advice also places the wife in a logistically difficult position: how does a wife submit to her husband and remain true to her monotheistic faith? We have seen that honoring the gods of the household was expected of wives and others, and that the power of the head of the household was reinforced by this practice. How exactly does a Christian wife participate in the daily activities of the household, such as meals, which included making offerings to the gods? The text leaves this question unanswered.<sup>48</sup>

Scholars offer a range of interpretations. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues that by advising conformity to traditional hierarchies, the author seeks to protect Christian wives and slaves who are vulnerable in non-Christian households.<sup>49</sup> These Christians should live in a manner “totally conformed to the customs and ethos of their pagan household and state.”<sup>50</sup> Following this interpretation to its logical conclusion, we might conclude that these Christians are being told to participate in traditional household cult practices and keep their true faith hidden. John Elliott disagrees, arguing that the advice to submit is aimed at converting the husband, not keeping the wives safe.<sup>51</sup> Since the larger theme of the letter is a “holy nonconformity” for Christians, it makes no sense that the author would capitulate when it comes to wives.<sup>52</sup> According to this interpretation, then, wives must accept their husbands’ authority in every way *except* the worship of his gods, and then be prepared to suffer the consequences.<sup>53</sup>

If it is difficult to decide what the author intended with this advice, we might switch the question to how wives would have responded. We do not know whether they would have attempted to abide by these instructions, amended them, ignored them, or disagreed with them entirely. Certainly, they would have considered this advice in the context of household practices and relationships. With this in mind, and with the help of other Christian views on women’s roles, households and mixed marriage, we can imagine a number of different options.

### **Christian Women in Households**

We know that early Christian communal rituals, such as shared meals, prayer, and scripture study, took place in houses, as that is where early Christian communities gathered. What practices might a wife enact if she is the only Christian in the house? One possibility was for her to keep her Christianity secret and show no signs of her loyalty to the Christian God. She

might follow the advice in 1 Peter 3:15, sanctifying the Lord in her heart, and attempt to avoid tension or censure altogether. As I mentioned above, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that this is the point of the text.<sup>54</sup> If a wife is in a particularly vulnerable position, she might also decide to participate in the household cult so as to raise no suspicion.

Another possibility would be to bring Christian rituals into the household and practice them autonomously, perhaps in secret. We have seen that household religious practices appear to have been fluid and diverse. Loyalty to the gods of the household was important, but there was room in daily practices and, in some cases, in the physical spaces of the house, for multiple types of worship. Scholars have noted that niches in the walls of kitchens and other service areas in some elite houses may have served the needs of the slaves in the house.<sup>55</sup> John Bodel argues that the variety of deities and objects found in household shrines indicates that the household cult could accommodate individual tastes and needs of particular households, or even individuals or small groups within households.<sup>56</sup> He writes that "the cult of the *Lares* provided an increasingly attractive locus for the manifestation and enactment of devotion to a variety of alternative, potentially subversive, deities (or ideas) in a legitimizing context."<sup>57</sup> As Bodel intimates, this setting might lend itself to surreptitious religious activity.

Tertullian, an early third-century opponent of exogamous marriage for Christian women, proves useful in imagining how this might work with Christian wives. He mentions several rituals wives might perform at home, warning that they could be difficult to hide, "Do you think to escape notice when you make the Sign of the Cross on your bed or on your body? Or when you blow away, with a puff of your breath, some unclean thing? Or when you get up, as you do even at night, to say your prayers?" (*Ad Uxorem* 2.5.3).<sup>58</sup> Signing oneself is most likely a reference to the practice of tracing the cross on the forehead or in the air over an object, such as



the bed which Tertullian mentions here.<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere Tertullian says this sign should be made “in all the ordinary actions of daily life”: before going in or out, before meals, when bathing, before sitting down, when lighting lamps, indeed, before any movement!<sup>60</sup>

“Blowing away some unclean thing” also refers to an early Christian practice of purifying the body by a ritual blowing or insufflation, which is often associated with baptism.<sup>61</sup> A later manual of Christian rituals, the *Apostolic Tradition*, mentions this practice: “Through consignation with moist breath and catching your spittle in your hand, your body is sanctified down to your feet. For when it is offered with a believing heart, just as from the font, the gift of the Spirit and the sprinkling of washing sanctifies him who believes” (41.17).<sup>62</sup> The Christian’s saliva here is analogized to baptismal water, and can effect a similar sanctification of the body.

The *Apostolic Tradition* also mentions nocturnal praying, as Tertullian does. This church order recommends that Christian husbands married to non-Christian wives should move to a different room when they rise to pray at night.<sup>63</sup> The text does not explain the reason for this, but there seems to be some negative effect on the prayer if a non-believing spouse is in the room.<sup>64</sup> It does not mention Christian wives married to Christian husbands, but perhaps the advice would be the same.

Finally, Tertullian mentions the tradition of the reserved sacrament, in which Christians would take a portion of the Eucharistic bread to consume on their own at home.<sup>65</sup> He asks, “Will not your husband know what it is which you secretly taste before (taking) any food?” (*ad Uxorem* 2.5.3).<sup>66</sup> We know that many traditional household rituals took place during meals in the form of food and drink offered to the gods. It is intriguing then to imagine a Christian at the table, ingesting this holy bread instead of offering it to the household gods, as a way of participating in the sacrament of the Eucharist at home.<sup>67</sup>

Yet a third possibility is that wives practiced their Christianity openly in the household, as one of many traditions honored there. Again, Tertullian is helpful. He begins his rant against mixed marriages by mentioning several recent cases of Christian women marrying non-Christian men (*ad Uxorem* 2.2.1). He quotes the argument of one of these Christian wives: "But some (husbands) endure our (practices), and do not impede us" (*ad Uxorem* 2.5.1).<sup>68</sup> The phenomenon of the tolerant husband emerges, which Tertullian finds problematic, but which the Christian wives may have found advantageous. In this situation, we can imagine that the individual Christian rituals described above, and perhaps others as well, could be performed without censure. Again, the fluidity of household practices and the multiple possible gods worshipped there, along with a tolerant head of household, would create an atmosphere in which a blending of cults would work well.<sup>69</sup>

All of these rituals are portable and non-communal practices that a Christian could perform in her non-Christian home. Each one, as well, might be viewed as a way of protecting or marking the body in a space where other gods are worshipped. Signing the bed, if it is the bed she will share with her husband, might serve to protect her from the impurities of intercourse with her non-Christian husband.<sup>70</sup> Likewise, ritual blowing away of impurities is a highly convenient ritual for Christians living among polluting pagans.<sup>71</sup> This replication of baptism, along with the reserved sacrament, offer ways for Christians to translate communal rituals, which would normally be practiced in church meetings, into individual rituals they can practice when and where they choose. Given the flexibility of household practices, we can imagine that wives may have had the opportunity to perform these rituals, perhaps even without the detection of others (despite Tertullian's skepticism). Through these acts, these Christian women may have perceived that they were making themselves into "holy wives" among non-believers.

In addition to her own ritual practices, wives might wield influence over others in the household, perhaps through modeling behavior, as 1 Peter suggests, or perhaps in other ways. Writing in the mid-first century, Paul suggests that believing wives and husbands can make their unbelieving spouses “holy,” enough so the children are also “holy” (1 Corinthians 7:14). Unfortunately, he does not comment further on this phenomenon of contagious holiness in households, but it seems to counteract the pollution represented by unbelievers.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps some of the rituals described above, those aimed at marking wives’ bodies, would be effective on family members as well.

There are hints throughout the early centuries of the evangelizing activities of wives, who would have had direct influence over children and slaves, and also would have had contact with visitors, business associates, clients, workers and so on.<sup>73</sup> 2 Timothy mentions that Timothy received his Christian education from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5; early second century C.E.). One wonders why there is no mention of the father and grandfather in this passage: are they out of the picture for some reason or perhaps not Christian? Either way, Christian teachings have been passed down through two generations of women in the household. The author of another Pastoral letter, 1 Timothy (early second century C.E.), worries about “idle” widows, “gadding about from house to house...saying what they should not say” (1 Timothy 5:13). We do not know the content of their speech, but it is possible that it is some sort of Christian teaching that the author finds objectionable.<sup>74</sup>

Clement of Alexandria (second half of second century C.E.) describes how male Christian teachers took their wives (“as Christian sisters”) into households so they could minister to the women in the household.<sup>75</sup> A similar practice is mentioned by later church manuals which advise deacons to send deaconesses to minister to Christian women who live in non-Christian

households, as it would not be appropriate for male Christian teachers to visit the women.<sup>76</sup>

These last examples help us imagine how the wives addressed in 1 Peter may have continued—or initiated—their contact with their Christian communities, perhaps by receiving Christian women teachers in their own homes. Or these wives may have even visited other households, serving as ministers and evangelists outside their homes.

## **Conclusion**

1 Peter's view was not the only one articulated by Christians about how wives should handle their "mixed marriages." A popular group of texts from the second and third centuries, the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, represents the opposite position: women should leave their marriages upon conversion and live celibate lives.<sup>77</sup> Because celibacy is a chief virtue in this brand of Christianity, these stories champion the disintegration of households, the moral superiority of the male Christian teacher, and the various ways wives resist and reject their husbands.<sup>78</sup> As scholars have pointed out, counter-cultural Christian literature like this may have prompted some of the conservative household advice we find in 1 Peter and elsewhere in the New Testament.<sup>79</sup>

Although the stories of these Christian heroines are entertaining and inspiring, they may not represent realistic options for most women at the time. For all but the very elite and independently wealthy, leaving one's household to follow a teacher would not have been economically viable, especially for a woman. And for the most part, Christianity did not spread by social revolution, even though there were rebellious components to it, but by an integration of Christian values and practices into traditional social structures. So the quiet, or perhaps not so quiet, evangelists who stayed in households were crucial to the Christian mission.

The kind of evangelizing behind the scenes we have discussed here, engaged in by wives and other household members, represents its own kind of counter-cultural activity, as Celsus and other critics recognized. 1 Peter 3:1-2 prompts us to see that religious practice, even when constrained by patriarchal values, can still empower otherwise disempowered participants. This is especially the case in ancient households, where power is acted out and resisted through religious practices. Devotion to a “foreign” deity, whether instead of or in addition to the gods of the household, is itself an act of resistance. In their subordinate position, these “holy wives” might reconfigure “the order of power in the world.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a part of a larger study of “mixed marriage” in early Christianity. See Johnson Hodge, “Married to an Unbeliever: Households, Hierarchies and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16,” *Harvard Theological Review* 103.1 (2010), 1-25.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Celsum*, 3.44 (Celsus’ work, *The True Doctrine*, is preserved in Origen’s third-century refutation, *Contra Celsum*). Translation from Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Tradition: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 110.

<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 262.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians, for example, mentions or directly addresses each of these groups. For a discussion of the social make-up of these communities, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983) and Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990) and idem, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Although women were also heads of households. See the story of Lydia in Acts 16:13-15.

<sup>6</sup> For 1 Peter 3:1-6, I use John H. Elliott’s translation in *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2000). For other biblical passages I use the NRSV translation, sometimes amended.

<sup>7</sup> The earliest discussion of believers married to unbelievers is found in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. Paul does not emphasize obedience of wives to husbands, but addresses both men and women in this situation and encourages them to stay in their marriages. See Johnson Hodge, “Married to an Unbeliever.”

<sup>8</sup> In my overview of Roman-period houses, I draw upon the following sources: John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan, eds., *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008); Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Ray Laurence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, eds., *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond* (Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 22; Portsmouth, RI: 1997); Daniel P. Harmon, “The Family Festivals of Rome,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.16.2, 1592-1603; David G. Orr, “Roman Domestic Religion: The Evidence of the Household Shrines,” *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.16.2, 1557-1591. See also my article, “Married to an Unbeliever.”

<sup>9</sup> Private transactions could be moved to a smaller side room, such as a bedroom (*cubiculum*). These rooms served multiple purposes including sleep, conversation, and private business. See Kristina Sessa, “Christianity and the *Cubiculum*: Spiritual Politics and Domestic Space in Late Antique Rome,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15:2 (2007), 176.

<sup>10</sup> John R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy 100 BC-AD 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 1-12, and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 12.

<sup>11</sup> Not everyone lived in large households in the ancient world. Many people lived in small apartments, called *insulae*, which were multi-storey apartment buildings. Others may have lived in housing too flimsy to have left any mark on the archaeological record. On *insulae*, see Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 132-133; idem, "Domus and *Insulae* in Rome: Families and Housefuls," in David Balch and Carolyn Osiek, eds. *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003) 3-18; Jan Theo Bakker, *Living and Working With the Gods: Studies of Evidence for Private Religion and its Material Environment in the City of Ostia (100-500 AD)* (Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology, 12; Amsterdam; J.C. Gieben, 1994), 44-55. On the living conditions of the poor in Roman cities, see C. R. Whittaker, "The Poor in the City of Rome," in *Land, City, and Trade in the Roman Empire* (Variorum Collected Studies, CS 408; Aldershot: Ashgate, 1993), art. VII, 8-1.

<sup>12</sup> See Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1253b.1-14 and Philo, *Joseph* 38-39, for two examples.

<sup>13</sup> For discussions of the discourse of household management among ancient authors, see Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Xenophon: Oeconomicus: A Social and Historical Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); and David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981). See Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 251-270, for Christian adaptations of household discourses. Balch traces the influence of household management on 1 Peter (*Let Wives*, 81-116).

<sup>14</sup> See articles in Bodel and Olyan, *Household and Family Religion*; Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion"; Harmon, "Family Festivals."

<sup>15</sup> Dale M. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 183; Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharist: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 47; M. Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972 [first published as *Greek Popular Religion* in 1940]), 73-74; Stanley K. Stowers, "Theorizing Ancient Household Religion," in Bodel and Olyan, *Household and Family Religion*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Translation amended from *Catullus, Tibullus, Pervigilium Veneris*, translated by J. P. Postgate and revised by G. P. Goold (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 331.

<sup>17</sup> Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 131-142; Charles K. Williams, "Roman Corinth: The Final Years of Pagan Cult Facilities along East Theater Street," in Daniel L. Schowalter and Steven J. Friesen, eds., *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 221-247; Maria Aurenhammer, "Sculptures of Gods and Heroes from Ephesos," in Helmut Koester, ed., *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Its Archaeology, Religion and Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 251-280; T. Fröhlich, *Lararien- und Fassadenbilder in den Vesuvstädten. Untersuchungen zur 'volkstümlichen' pompejanischen Malerei* (RömMitt-Erg 32. Mainz, 1991); George K. Boyce, "Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 24 (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1937); Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion."

<sup>18</sup> Bowes, *Private Worship*, 27-28; John Bodel, "Cicero's Minerva, *Penates*, and the Mother of the *Lares*: An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," in idem and Olyan, eds., *Household and Family Religion*, 256-264 (*Penates*), 264-268 (*Lares*). See also the studies of Boyce, Fröhlich and Orr in note above.

<sup>19</sup> Bowes, *Private Worship*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Bodel, "Cicero's Minerva," 261-262.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 265. See also Pedar Foss, "Watchful *Lares*: Roman Household Organization and the Rituals of Cooking and Eating," in Ray Laurence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, eds., *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond* (Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 22; Portsmouth, RI: 1997) 197-218; Michele George, "Repopulating the Roman House," in *The Roman Family in Italy: Status, Sentiment, Space*, Beryl Rawson and Paul Weaver, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 316-17.

<sup>22</sup> On the patriarchal household and the role of religion, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 251-284.

<sup>23</sup> Orr, "Roman Domestic Religion," 1569-1575; Harmon, "Family Festivals," 1595; Bowes, *Private Worship*, 27-28. On the role of power in civic cult in Rome, especially the imperial cult, see S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Translation of *Trinummus* (also known as "Three Bob Day") amended from *Plautus in Five Volumes*. Volume V, translated by Paul Nixon (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 104.

<sup>25</sup> Translation of *Rudens* amended from *Plautus in Five Volumes*. Volume IV, translated by Paul Nixon (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932) 409.

<sup>26</sup> Translation amended from Marcus Porcius Cato “On Agriculture”; Marcus Terentius Varro “On Agriculture,” translated by William David Hooper and revised by Harrison Boyd Ash (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 123-125.

<sup>27</sup> In patrilocal societies like those in the Roman empire, brides typically moved from their father’s household to their groom’s household. Slaves may have been born into their masters’ households, but also may have come from elsewhere, even from distant lands conquered by the Romans. On marriage in this period, see the following (which represent just a sampling of the vast scholarship on this topic): Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges From the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Michael L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ: 2001); Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Beryl Rawson, ed., *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). On slavery see Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> Balch, *Let Wives*, 65-80.

<sup>29</sup> *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 140 D (*Moralia* I.140D). Translation from Sarah B. Pomeroy, ed., *Plutarch’s Advice to the Bride and Groom and A Consolation to His Wife: English Translations, Commentary, Interpretive Essays and Bibliography* (New York: Oxford, 1991), 7.

<sup>30</sup> One of the first mentions of the term “Christian” (*Christianos*) occurs in 1 Peter 4:16 (other New Testament occurrences are in Acts 11:26 and 26:28). Most scholars believe this originated as a derogatory term, first used by non-believers about followers of Christ and eventually adopted by believers about themselves (Elliott, *1 Peter*, 789-794).

<sup>31</sup> Elliott’s translation (*1 Peter*, 511).

<sup>32</sup> Colossians 3:18-4:1 illustrates this three-pronged structure nicely: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.”

<sup>33</sup> See Pomeroy, *Xenophon*; Balch, *Let Wives* for examples and discussion.

<sup>34</sup> “Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honour to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life—so that nothing may hinder your prayers” (1 Peter 3:7). There are no instructions to children or fathers in this letter.

<sup>35</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 574.

<sup>36</sup> Elliott points out that 1 Peter 3:1c-2 is “strikingly similar to the general exhortation of 2:12 in its structure, terminology and expressed goal” (*1 Peter*, 560). In 2:12 the author seems to be speaking to the whole Christian community and in 3:1-2 just to wives.

<sup>37</sup> The author uses the same verb (*hypotassō*) in 2:13 as in 2:18 (for slaves) and 3:1 (for wives). It also occurs in 3:5, 3:22 and 5:5. As Elliott points out, this is a “term of thematic significance” in this letter (*1 Peter*, 486).

<sup>38</sup> Balch, *Let Wives*, 89, 95.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-76.

<sup>40</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 260; Balch, *Let Wives*, 99.

<sup>41</sup> MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 199; Balch, *Let Wives*, 97-99. Plutarch’s *Advice to Bride and Groom* is a commonly cited parallel: “It is the same with wives. If they submit to (*hypotattousai*) their husbands, they are praised” (142D; translation from Pomeroy, ed., *Plutarch’s Advice to the Bride and Groom and A Consolation to His Wife: English Translations, Commentary, Interpretive Essays and Bibliography* (New York: Oxford, 1991), 10.

<sup>42</sup> Balch, *Let Wives*, 101-102; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 561-566. See 1 Timothy 2:9-11 for another Christian text that links women’s adornment with modest behavior, submission to men and silence.

<sup>43</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 571. The author refers here to Genesis 18:12.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 573.

<sup>45</sup> Margaret MacDonald’s discussion of this passage has been helpful to me (*Early Christian Women*, 195-204). Thinking along the same lines, she uses the phrase “quiet evangelist.”

<sup>46</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 81.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>48</sup> In his summary of this passage, David Balch observes: "He [the author] silently passed over the Greco-Roman expectation that such submission would include worship of the gods of the husband and master" (*Let Wives*, 109). Balch does not comment further on this dilemma.

<sup>49</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 262.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>51</sup> Elliott, *I Peter*, 584.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 584.

<sup>53</sup> This seems to be what Elliott is assuming when he writes: "This encouragement of wifely conduct leading to spousal conversion thus contrasts sharply with Greco-Roman household instruction which expected wifely devotion to the gods of the husband" (*I Peter*, 558-59).

<sup>54</sup> *In Memory of Her*, 262.

<sup>55</sup> Foss, "Watchful *Lares*," 197-218; George, "Repopulating," 316-17. For a different interpretation of these niches, see David L. Balch, "Rich Pompeian Houses, Shops for Rent, and the Huge Apartment Building in Herculaneum as Typical Spaces for Pauline House Churches," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27.1 (2004), 39-40.

<sup>56</sup> Bodel, "Cicero's Minerva," 260-262, 265.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>58</sup> Translation from William P. Le Saint., *Tertullian: Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage. To His Wife, An Exhortation to Chastity, Monogamy* (Ancient Christian Writers 13; New York: Newman Press, 1951), 30.

<sup>59</sup> Le Saint 129, n. 116.

<sup>60</sup> *De Corona* 3. Cited by Paul F. Bradshaw, et. al., *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 211, n. 65.

<sup>61</sup> Le Saint, 129, n. 117.

<sup>62</sup> Translation from Bradshaw *et al.*, *Apostolic Tradition*, 200.

<sup>63</sup> "And rising about midnight, wash your hands with water and pray. And if your wife is also present, pray both together; but if she is not yet a believer, withdrawing into another room, pray and return again to your bed" (*Apostolic Tradition* 41.11-12; translation from Bradshaw et al., 198). This is a fascinating comment because it means that the husband, who might be the head of a household, has converted to Christianity and the wife has not followed him. The author seems to expect, however, that she will eventually convert as well ("if she is not yet a believer").

<sup>64</sup> See also Bowes, *Private Worship*, 54.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55.

<sup>66</sup> Translation from Le Saint, 30. See also *De Oratione* 19.2-4, where Tertullian scolds those who are fasting for refusing even the Eucharist (cited in Bowes, *Private Worship*, 54-55).

<sup>67</sup> Lucius Apuleius (second century C.E.) tells the story of a wife who worships a god called "only," who drinks "unmixed wine" at home (*Metamorphoses* 9.14).

<sup>68</sup> Translation amended from Le Saint, 30.

<sup>69</sup> John Bodel cites an example that is suggestive of this sort of mixing of cults: the *Historia Augusta* reports that Severus Alexander (222-235 C.E.) used to worship (*rem divinam faciebat*) in his household shrine, "in which he kept, along with images of his ancestors, statues of Alexander the Great, a selection of 'only the best' deified emperors, certain 'more holy' souls...including the first-century neo-Pythagorean holy man, Apollonius of Tyana, and (on the supposed authority of a contemporary writer), statuettes of Christ, Abraham, Orpheus, and 'others of the sort'" ("Cicero's Minerva," 263-264, citing *Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Severus Alexander* 29.2). As Bodel explains, this document is unreliable historically, and probably dates to late fourth or early fifth centuries ("Cicero's Minerva," 264). Nevertheless, it refers to a phenomenon we know is going on in household worship, that of blending gods, heroes and ancestors according to the needs of particular households or worshippers. In this case the mix includes Christian and non-Christian figures.

<sup>70</sup> These are precisely the concerns expressed in a story told by Justin Martyr, in which a Christian wife struggles in her marriage to a pagan husband. She eventually divorces him, so that she does not have to "participate in his wrongful and impious acts by continuing to live with him by sharing his table and his bed" (*Second Apology* 2.1-6).

<sup>71</sup> Christians often used purity language to define the boundaries between themselves and outsiders. This language is prevalent in the earliest Christian texts, the letters of Paul, who often links idolatry, sexual immorality and pollution; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 49-51. For other studies on purity in Paul, see Michael Newton, *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) (Klawans offers some important corrections to Newton on pp. 150-56); Christine Hayes,



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*Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2002).

<sup>72</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:14 reads: "For the unbelieving husband is made holy by the wife and the unbelieving wife is made holy by the brother. Otherwise your children are unclean; but now they are holy." See my article, "Married to an Unbeliever" for discussion and sources.

<sup>73</sup> MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 203.

<sup>74</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 312-313.

<sup>75</sup> *Stromateis* 3.6.53.3: "They took their wives around as Christian sisters rather than spouses, to be their fellow-ministers in relation to housewives, though whom the Lord's teaching penetrated into the women's quarters without scandal." Translation from J. Ferguson, *Stromateis Books 1-3* (Fathers of the Church 85; Washington: Catholic University, 1991), 289.

<sup>76</sup> *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 3.15.

<sup>77</sup> For English translations of these texts, see William Schneemelcher, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, *Writings Related to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects* (rev. ed. of the collection initiated by Edgar Hennecke; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992).

<sup>78</sup> For scholarship that deals with these themes, see François Bovon, ed. with Ann Graham Brock and Christopher R. Matthews, *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: Harvard Divinity School Studies* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religion, 1998); Shelly Matthews, "Thinking of Thecla: Issues in Feminist Historiography," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17.2 (2001), 39-55; Kate Cooper, *The Virgin Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Andrew Jacobs, "A Family Affair: Marriage, Class, and Ethics in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.1 (1999): 105-38.

<sup>79</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 265. Dennis R. MacDonald argues that the Pastoral letters may be a response to texts like the Apocryphal Acts: *The Legend and the Apostle: the Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983).

<sup>80</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory*, 81.