Prejudice and Christian Beginnings

Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies

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Introduction

Exploring the Intersections of Race, Gender, Status, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies

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Prejudice and Christian Beginnings brings together the critical and constructive explorations of leading scholars who have already made significant contributions either to the study of the intersection of race,[1] ethnicity,[2] and critical feminist theory[3] with Early Christian Studies or

1. See the collected essays in Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Race Critical Theories: Text and Context* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).

2. Cf. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, ed., *Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), and Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity* (Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2003).

3. Among the vast literature, I have found especially helpful Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanti, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); France Winddance Twine and Kathleen M. Blee, ed., *Feminism and Antiracism: International Struggles for Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

to the investigation of how race, gender, ethnicity, and empire[4] shaped early Christian or classical texts. It explores how Early Christian Studies can benefit not only from the diverse methodological approaches already developed within the field, but also from interactions with insights from classics, from the history of antiquity, from the study of religion and the*logy,[5] and from critical theory—especially critical race, feminist, and postcolonial theories.

Recently, scholars of classical antiquity as well as of canonical and postcanonical Early Christian literatures have turned their attention to ethnicity in the ancient world. They have been slow, however, to engage this research with critical theories of gender, on the one hand, and critical race theory, on the other. Hence, this interdisciplinary volume brings together the work of important scholars in the fields of Christian Testament Studies, Classics, early Christian history, and Jewish Studies.

By proposing the study of race, gender, empire, and ethnicity as an entry point or theoretical lens, these essays make great contributions to rethinking how we read ancient texts, including the Christian Scriptures, as well as to reconceptualizing the field of Early Christian Studies. The chapters address topics such as gender, ethnicity, and race under the Roman Empire; the crucible of nineteenth-century thinking about race, gender, and empire that has shaped Classics as well as Early Christian Studies; and the theoretical frameworks and methods by which such studies can best proceed in their analysis of race, gender, and ethnicity in the ancient worlds.

Scholars for some time have discussed ethnic constructions of Jews, Barbarians, and Greeks, how religion and gender shaped these

4. For a discussion of empire and Early Christian Studies, see my book, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

5. In order to indicate the brokenness and inadequacy of human language to name the Divine, I switched in my book, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), from the orthodox Jewish writing of G-d, which I had adopted in *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) and *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), to this spelling of G*d, which seeks to avoid the conservative malestream association which the writing of G-d has for Jewish feminists. Since the*logy means speaking about G*d or G*d-talk, I write it in the same way.

identity constructions, and how Roman imperialism has produced or sustained these ideological structures of domination. In recent years, classicists have turned with great energy to the topic of race and ethnicity (for example, Jonathan Hall,[6] Edith Hall,[7] Benjamin Isaac,[8] Siân Jones[9]) and have continued to research the topic of gender in Mediterranean antiquity. While scholarship on the topic of ethnicity has swelled, longstanding arguments that "race" (and especially racism) and "gender" (hetero-sexism) are modern categories not applicable to an analysis of the ancient worlds have compelled some scholars of antiquity to shy away from using the terms "race" or "gender" in discussions of the ancient worlds. Recently, classicists such as Benjamin Isaacs, however, have begun to utilize race as a critical category of analysis in the investigation of ancient sources.

In the study of Christianity in antiquity, too, scholars like Mark G. Brett,[10] Denise Buell,[11] Judith Lieu,[12] Shaye Cohen,[13] and Gay Byron[14] have done path-breaking work in identifying the way in which early Christian writers construct race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. While the topic of race, gender, and ethnicity in the ancient world has begun to be addressed, scholars such as R. S. Sugirtharajah[15] and

6. Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

7. Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: University Press, 1991).

8. Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

9. Siân Jones, *The Archeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and in the Present* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

10. Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002).

11. Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

12. Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

13. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

14. Gay L. Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

15. Among his many publications, see R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Empire: Postcolonial Explorations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

the contributors to this volume have embarked on the exploration as to how racial and ethnic theories of modernity have affected the origins and practices of Early Christian Studies themselves.

With "prejudice and domination" as its primary theoretical lens, this collection of essays seeks to continue the conversation begun at a conference on "Race, Gender, and Ethnicity" held at Harvard University Divinity School in 2007. It explores a number of significant avenues of inquiry that push scholarship forward in several directions. First, it seeks to further the theoretical discussion on critical race theory and the intersection of race with class, gender, and empire in the study of religion in general and in that of early Christianity in particular. Second, while classicists have investigated race and ethnicity in antiquity, there has been less scholarship specifically directed toward the intersections of race, gender, ethnicity, and empire in Early Christian Studies. This study seeks to address that gap.

Third, the volume engages in explicit conversation about the theoretical frameworks and methodologies by which Early Christian and Early Jewish Studies might proceed in the analysis of race, gender, and ethnicity. Early Christian Studies are caught between the longstanding authority of the historical critical method, which insists that such inquiry be limited to the first centuries C.E., on the one hand, and critical theory, hermeneutics, epistemology, cultural studies, ethnicity studies, and literary studies, on the other, which insist that all interpretations and readings are shaped by contemporary intellectual frameworks and sociopolitical locations. Work investigating race, gender, or colonialism in the Christian Testament is often marginalized, and students who want to address the topic of race, gender, or domination often do double or triple work as they must "master" a set of scholarly tools that does not allow them to investigate the problems that initially drew them to the field.

Finally, the significant analytics of feminist, postcolonial, and critical race theories have developed alongside each other but have not been integrated to accomplish an intersectional analysis of early Christian literature and history. While scholars of early Christianity have quickly embraced the study of ethnicity or empire in antiquity, including the important question of how ethnicity and empire shape

religion and religious practices, they have been slower to address the question of how race and gender are involved in social and ideological constructions of Christianity. This is more than surprising, since a rich body of critical feminist work on the intersectionality of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and empire has existed for quite some time.[16]

I. Toward an Intersectional Social Analytic in Early Christian Studies

The term intersectionality was coined by the legal scholar Kimberly Crenshaw and entails "the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually multiplicative vectors of race, gender, class, sexuality, and imperialism." It has emerged as a key theoretical tool in critical feminist and race studies for subverting race/gender and other binaries of domination. Some have criticized "identity politics" for eliding intragroup differences; intersectionality seeks to address that criticism while still recognizing the necessity of group politics. "Finally, intersectionality invites scholars to come to terms with the legacy of the exclusions of multiply marginalized subjects from feminist and antiracist work," and "to draw on the ostensibly unique epistemological position of marginalized subjects to fashion a vision of equality."[17] Hence, I suggest, intersectionality can provide a critical framework and lens for the critical explorations of race, gender, ethnicity, and empire in Early Christian Studies undertaken in the essays of this book.

Bonnie Thornton Dill studied this emerging method of social analysis in 2001 and saw it as "in the process of being created."[18] According to Dill, intersectional scholarship is grounded in the experience of those whose identities are constructed at the intersections of

16. See however now Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Benny Liew, Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *They Were All Together in One Place. Toward Minority Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: SBL, 2009).

17. Jennifer C. Nash, "Rethinking Intersectionality," *Feminist Review* 89, no. 1 (2008) 3.

18. Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Work in the Intersections of Race, Gender, Ethnicity and Other Dimensions of Difference in Higher Education," *Newsletter of the Consortium on Race, Gender, and Ethnicity of the University of Maryland* (Fall 2002) 5–7. Accessed on 8/23/2008 at http://www.crge.umd.edu/publications/news.pdf. See also, Patricia Hill Collins, Fighting Words, 201–29.

race, gender, and ethnicity. The goal of this work "at the intersections" is to contribute to a more just world. The theory of intersectionality has been articulated as a theory of marginalized subjectivity, as a theory of identity, and as a theory of the matrix of oppressions. In the first iteration, intersectional theory refers only to multiply marginalized subjects; in its second iteration, the theory seeks to illuminate how identity is constructed at the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and imperialism; the third iteration stresses intersectional theory as a theory of structures and sites of oppression. Race, sex, gender, class, and imperialism are seen as vectors of dominating power that create coconstitutive social processes which engender the differential simultaneity of dominations and subordinations.

Leslie McCall in turn describes three methodological approaches to intersectionality which are defined primarily "in terms of . . . how they understand and use categories to explore the complexity of intersectionality in social life."[19] She calls the first approach "anticategorical complexity," which deconstructs the analytical categories of race, gender, class, sexuality, and imperialism. She terms the second approach "intracategorical complexity" because scholars working in this mode focus on "people whose identity crosses the boundaries of traditionally constructed groups."[20] The third approach, termed "intercategorical complexity," requires that scholars adopt "existing analytical categories" to analyze "the relationships of inequality among social groups."[21] Whereas the first approach renders categories of analysis suspect because they have no foundations in reality, the third seeks to use them strategically. The first approach deploys postmodernist discourse, which "attempts to move beyond essentialism by pluralizing and dissolving the stability and analytic utility of the categories of race, class, gender, sexuality," whereas the third holds "the relations of domination and subordination that are named and articulated through the processes of racism and racialization still exist and they still require analytic and political specification and engagement."[22]

19. Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs* 30, no. 3 (2005) 1773.
20. Thornton Dill, *Intersections*, 5.
21. McCall, *Complexity*, 1773.
22. Alexander and Mohanti, *Feminist Genealogies*, xvii.

In sum, it is important to pay attention to the material and discursive significance of categories in order to analyze how they are "produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life."[23] The interactive complexity of the social and discursive relations of inequality within and across analytical categories is at the heart of an intersectional analytics.

In attempting to define the categories of race and gender as well as their intersectionality, Sally Hasslanger[24] has pointed out that in such an intersectional analysis, the definition of gender or race in terms of social relations of dominance is decisive. Gender and race categories are defined in terms of one's social position. They are hierarchically—or, as I would say, kyriarchically[25]—structured, and bodily differences function as physical markers to socially distinguish and locate people in the pyramid of dominations.

Hasslanger distinguishes between race and ethnicity in the following way:

> One's ethnicity concerns one's ancestral links to a certain geographical region (perhaps together with participation in the cultural practices of that region); often ethnicity is associated with characteristic physical features. For our purposes, however, it might be useful to employ the notion of "ethnicity" for those groups that are like races . . . except that they do not experience systematic subordination or privilege in the context in question. . . . In short, we can distinguish between grouping individuals on the basis of their (assumed) origins, and grouping them *hierarchically* on the basis of their (assumed) origins, and the contrast between race and ethnicity might be a useful way to capture this distinction.[26]

With such a theorization, Hasslanger joins the ranks of First World materialist feminists, as well as of Two-Thirds World feminists who

23. McCall, *Complexity*, 1783.
24. Sally Hasslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Nous* 34, no. 1 (2000) 31–55.
25. See pages 6–13 below, where I discuss this term.
26. Hasslanger, *Gender and Race*, 45.

have problematized the interpretation of wo/men's[27] oppression solely in terms of gender or racial dualism. They have pointed out, on the one hand, that wo/men are oppressed not only by heterosexism, but also by racism, classism, and colonialism. On the other hand, they have rejected an essentializing definition of gender and patriarchy which holds that all men are oppressors and all wo/men are their victims. The same critique of dualistic essentializing constructions applies to race, class, and postcolonial theories.

Instead, critical intersectional theorists have argued consistently that wo/men of subordinated races, nations, and classes are often more oppressed by elite white wo/men than by the men of their own class, race, culture, or religion. As a result of this contradiction in wo/men's lives, the interconnection between the exclusion of wo/men and all other "subordinates" from citizenship has not been given sufficient attention. The same is true for its ideological justifications in the form of reified "natural" sexual/racial/class/cultural differences. Hence, intersectional theorists usually conceptualize such social and ideological structures of domination as *hierarchical*, in order to map and make visible the complex interstructuring of the conflicting status positions of different wo/men.

27. In order to lift into consciousness the linguistic violence of so-called generic male-centered language, I write the term wo/men with a slash, in order to use the term "wo/men" and not "men" in an inclusive way. I suggest that whenever you read "wo/men," you need to understand it in the generic sense. Wo/man includes man, she includes he, and female includes male. Feminist Studies of language have elaborated that Western, kyriocentric, that is, master, lord, father, male-centered language systems, understand language as both generic and as gender specific. Wo/men always must think at least twice, if not three times, and adjudicate whether we are meant or not by so-called generic terms such as "men, humans, Americans, or professors." To use "wo/men" as an inclusive generic term invites male readers to learn how to "think twice" and to experience what it means not to be addressed explicitly. Since wo/men always must arbitrate whether we are meant or not, I consider it a good spiritual exercise for men to acquire the same sophistication and to learn how to engage in the same hermeneutical process of "thinking twice" and of asking whether they are meant when I speak of wo/men. Since, according to Wittgenstein, the limits of our language are the limits of our world, such a change of language patterns is a very important step toward the realization of a new feminist consciousness.

II. Naming Intersectional Structures of Domination: Kyriarchy

I believe that the label "hierarchy" for such a pyramidal system is a misnomer, since it only targets one specific, religiously sanctioned form of domination. Hence, I have proposed to replace the category of "hierarchy" with the neologism *kyriarchy*, which is derived from the Greek words *kyrios* (lord, slave master, father, husband, elite propertied educated man) and *archein* (to rule, dominate).[28]

In classical antiquity, the rule of the emperor, lord, slave master, husband, or the elite freeborn, propertied, educated gentleman to whom disenfranchised men and all wo/men were subordinated is best characterized as *kyriarchy*. In antiquity, the social system of kyriarchy was institutionalized either in empire or as a democratic political form of ruling. Kyriarchy is best theorized as a complex pyramidal system of intersecting multiplicative social and religious structures of superordination and subordination, of ruling and oppression. Kyriarchal relations of domination are built on elite male property rights as well as on the exploitation, dependency, inferiority, and obedience of wo/men who signify all those subordinated. Such kyriarchal relations are still today at work in the multiplicative intersectionality of class, race, gender, ethnicity, empire, and other structures of discrimination.

Kyriarchy is constituted as a sociocultural and religious system of dominations by intersecting multiplicative structures of oppression. The different sets of relations of domination shift historically and produce a different constellation of oppression in different times and cultures. The structural positions of subordination that have been fashioned by kyriarchal relations stand in tension with those required by radical democracy.

Rather than identifying kyriarchy with the binary male over female, white over black, Western over colonialized peoples, it is best to understand this term in the classical sense of antiquity. Modern democracies are still structured as complex pyramidal political systems of superiority and inferiority, of dominance and subordination.

28. For the first development of this concept, see my book *But She Said*, 103–32.

As kyriarchal democracies, they are stratified by gender, race, class, religion, heterosexualism, and age; these are *structural positions* that are assigned to us more or less by birth. However, how people live these structural kyriarchal positions is conditioned not simply by these structural positions themselves, but also by the subject positions through which we live our structural kyriarchal positions. Whereas an essentialist approach assigns to people an "authentic" identity that is derived from our structural position, our subject position becomes coherent and compelling through political discourse, interpretive frameworks, and the development of theoretical horizons regarding domination.

Thus, a critical intersectional analytic does not understand kyriarchy as an essentialist ahistorical system. Instead, it articulates kyriarchy as a heuristic (derived from the Greek, meaning "to find") concept, or as a diagnostic, analytic instrument that enables investigation into the multiplicative interdependence of gender, race, class, and imperial stratifications, as well as into their discursive inscriptions and ideological reproductions. Moreover, it highlights that people inhabit several structural positions of race, sex, gender, class, and ethnicity. If one position becomes privileged, it constitutes a nodal point. While in any particular historical moment class may be the primary modality through which one experiences gender and race, in other circumstances gender may be the privileged position through which one experiences sexuality, race, and class.

Rather than trace the different historical formations of kyriarchy in Western societies and biblical religions, I discuss here the classic and modern forms of democratic kyriarchy and its legitimating discourses. *Greek kyriarchal democracy* constituted itself by excluding the "others" who did not have a share in the land, but whose labor sustained society. It measured freedom and citizenship over and against slavery, but also in terms of gender. Moreover, the socioeconomic realities in the Greek city-state were such that only a few select freeborn, propertied, elite, male heads of households actually exercised democratic government. According to the theoretical vision—but not the historical realization—of democracy, all those living in the *polis*, the city-state, should be equal citizens, able to participate in government. In theory, all citizens share equal rights,

speech, and power. As the assembly or congress (in Greek, *ekklēsia*) of free citizens, people were to deliberate and decide together the best ways to pursue their own well-being and the welfare of all citizens. In practice, however, democratic government excluded most inhabitants of the city-state.

This classic Greek form of kyriarchal democracy was both kyriocentric and ethnocentric. It drew its boundaries in terms of dualistic polarities and analogies between gods/humans, Greeks/Barbarians, male/female, human/beast, culture/nature, civilized/uncivilized world. Civilization, war, and marriage constituted the boundaries of citizenship. The structuring dividing lines run between men who owned property and those who were owned, between rulers and those who were ruled, between those who, as superiors, commanded and those who, as subordinates, had to obey, between those who, free from manual labor, had leisure for philosophy and politics, and those who were economically dependent, whose labor was exploited.

This mapping of ancient kyriarchy as an overarching system of domination, however, must not be misconstrued as a universal ahistorical "master paradigm." Rather, it is best understood as a particular reflection of the sociopolitical situation and common good of the Athenian city-state. Nevertheless, in its uses of ancient Greek democracy, which systemically excluded slaves, wo/men, and foreigners, Western political philosophy has justified such structures of exclusion. The political discourses of subordination that shape the subject positions of domination have decisively determined modern forms of democracy.

Roman kyriarchal imperialism is exemplified by a monarchical pyramid[29] of intersecting structures of domination that incorporates elements of traditional democratic practices (for example, the Senate). At its apex stood the emperor, who is called *pater patrum* or the "father of all fathers," and who is divinized and acclaimed as "God of Gods and Lord of Lords." Roman imperial power was seen as *Pax*

29. For a similar construction of the social pyramid of the Roman Empire, but without taking gender into account, see G. Alföldi, *The Social History of Rome* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1985), as well as Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).

Romana, a beneficial system of peace for all conquered peoples. Its harsh and exploitative rule is symbolically indicted in the Book of Revelation.[30]

Neo-Aristotelian philosophy legitimated this Roman kyriarchal model of imperial power and entered into the Christian Scriptures in the form of kyriarchal injunctions to submission. The First Epistle of Peter, for instance, admonishes Christian servants to be submissive even to harsh and brutal masters (2:18–25) and instructs freeborn wives to subordinate themselves to their husbands, even those who are not Christians (3:1–6). Simultaneously, it entreats Christians to be subject to and honor the emperor as supreme (2:13–17). In the United States today, this kyriarchal scriptural ethos funds the political Right's discourses on marriage and family values.

The *modern (American) form of democratic kyriarchy or kyriarchal democracy*, like ancient Greek democracy, also initially excluded freeborn wo/men, as well as immigrant, poor, and slave wo/men, from democratic rights. "Property" and elite male status by birth and education, not simply biological-cultural masculinity, entitled a few men to govern over the many. Modern liberal democracy thus continued many of the ideological practices found in ancient democratic kyriarchy, insofar as it claims that its citizens have equal rights and are entitled to "liberty and the pursuit of happiness," while simultaneously retaining allegedly "natural" kyriarchal, economic, socio-political stratifications.

Hence, modern political philosophy continues to assume that the propertied, educated, elite Western Man is defined by reason, self-determination, and full citizenship, whereas freeborn wo/men and other subordinated peoples are characterized by emotion, service,

30. For this debate, see for instance Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, 2nd edition with a new epilogue (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1998). See especially also the classic work of W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches*. Updated Edition by Mark W. Wilson (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001), which appeared first in 1904. For the more recent discussion, see Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996); Leonard J. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), argued for no persecution at all.

and dependence. They are seen not as rational and responsible adult subjects, but as emotional, helpless, and child-like, subject to exploitation. Emancipatory biblical studies such as postcolonial studies or liberation theologies have done well to expose this model. But insofar as they have developed their analytic without considering explicitly the status position of multiply oppressed wo/men, they perpetuate the ideologies of kyriocentrism, despite their intentions.

Furthermore, modern political philosophy elaborates two aspects of kyriarchal power, one seeking to secure species reproduction, the other sexual gratification. The first sustains the kyriarchal order by wielding control over wives, children, slaves, servants, and wealth. The second articulates kyriarchal power as masculine-phallic power that controls those it desires. Kyriarchal power operates along the axes of gender, race, class, culture, nation, and religion. Its "politics" of dominations fashions ideological "subject positions" around which notions of discrimination and domination are constructed.

In light of this analysis, it becomes clear that the universalist kyriocentric rhetoric of Euro-American elite men does not simply reinforce the dominance of the male sex, but it legitimates the imperial "White Father" or, in black idiom, the enslaving "Boss-Man" as the universal subject. By implication, any critical theory—be it critical race, feminist, liberationist, or Marxist theory—that articulates gender, class, or race difference as a primary and originary difference masks the complex interstructuring of kyriarchal dominations inscribed *in* the subject positions of individual wo/men and in the status positions of dominance and subordination *between* wo/men. It also masks the participation of white elite wo/men, or better "ladies," and of Christian religion in kyriarchal oppression, insofar as both have served as civilizing colonialist conduits of kyriarchal knowledges, values, and culture.

Since modern liberal democracies are modeled after the classical ideal of kyriarchal democracy, they continue the contradiction between kyriarchal practices and democratic self-understandings inscribed in the discourses of democracy in antiquity. It must not be overlooked, however, that this institutionalized contradiction between the ideals of radical emancipatory democracies and their historical kyriarchal actualizations has also engendered emancipatory movements seeking full self-determining citizenship.

In conclusion, I want to stress the following structural aspects of kyriarchy:

- Kyriarchy is a complex pyramidal system of dominations that works through the violence of economic exploitation and lived subordination. However, this kyriarchal pyramid must not be seen as static, but as an always-changing net of relations of domination.
- Kyriarchy is realized differently in different historical contexts. Democratic kyriarchy or kyriarchal democracy was articulated differently in antiquity than in modernity. It is different in Greece, Hellenism, Rome, Asia Minor, Europe, America, Japan, or India; it is different in Judaism, Islam, or Catholicism.
- Not only a gender system, but also the stratification systems of race, class, colonialism, and heterosexism structure and determine this kyriarchal system. These structures intersect with each other in a pyramidal fashion; they are not parallel but multiplicative. The full power of kyriarchal oppression comes to the fore in the lives of wo/men living on the bottom of the kyriarchal pyramid.
- To function, kyriarchal cultures need a servant class, a servant race, a servant gender, a servant people. Such a servant class is maintained through the ideologies of kyriocentrism, which are internalized through education, socialization, and brute violence, and rationalized by malestream scholarship. Kyriarchy is sustained by the belief that members of a servant class of people are naturally or by divine decree inferior to those whom they serve.
- Both in Western modernity and in Greco-Roman antiquity, kyriarchy stands in tension with a democratic ethos and social system of equality and freedom. In a radical democratic system, power is not exercised through "power over" or through violence and subordination, but through the human capacities for respect, responsibility, self-determination, and self-esteem. This radical democratic ethos has repeatedly engendered emancipatory movements that insisted on equal freedom, dignity, and justice for all.

- Feminist political theorists have shown that the classical Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato articulated in different ways a theory of kyriarchal democracy, in order to justify the exclusion of certain people, such as freeborn wo/men or slave wo/men and men, from participation in democratic government. These people were not fit to govern, the philosophers argued, because of their deficient natural powers of reasoning. Such explicit ideological justifications need to be developed at a point in history when it becomes increasingly obvious that those who are excluded from the political life of the *polis*, such as freeborn wo/men, educated slaves, wealthy *metics* (alien residents), and traveling mercenaries, are actually indispensable to it. Philosophical rationalizations of the exclusion of diverse people from citizenship and government are engendered by the contradiction between the democratic vision of the city-state and its actual practices.
- This contradiction between the logic of democracy and historical sociopolitical kyriarchal practices has produced the kyriocentric logic of identity as the assertion of "natural differences" between elite men and wo/men, freeborn and slaves, property owners and farmers or artisans, Athenian-born citizens and other residents, Greeks and Barbarians, the civilized and uncivilized world. A similar process of ideological kyriocentrism is inscribed in Christian Scriptures in and through the so-called (household) codes of submission. It is found in modern societies in the form of the family as nucleus of the kyriarchal state.[31]

III. Changing Kyriarchal Relations of Domination

In the past centuries, emancipatory struggles for equal rights as citizens have gained voting and civil rights for all adult citizens in many

31. See the excellent intersectional analysis of Patricia Hill Collins, "It's all in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation," *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998) 62–82.

parts of the world. Since these movements, however, could not completely overcome the kyriarchal stratifications that continue to determine modern liberal representative democracies, they seem to have made the democratic circle merely coextensive with the kyriarchal pyramid, thereby reinscribing the contradiction between democratic vision and political kyriarchal practice and in turn spawning new movements of emancipation. Such an analysis helps us to understand the work of emancipatory scholarship and education to be an integral part of social radical democratic movements for change.

In and through cultural, political, and religious discourses, the social structures in which we are positioned are interpreted. Since scholars cannot stand outside of interpretive frameworks available in our society and time, we "make sense" out of texts and life with their help. If we always have to resort to existing interpretive discourses for making sense of our lives or of biblical texts, then the importance of critical theories and social movements for justice becomes obvious.

Since malestream hegemonic discourses provide the frameworks in which we "make meaning," emancipatory discourses must provide analyses of "common sense" assumptions that illuminate not only the choreography of oppression but also the possibilities for a radical democratic society and religion. Emancipatory discourses, however, are able to articulate a self- and world-understanding of justice only within the context of radical democratic movements that shape theories that help to exploit the contradictions that exist between the diverse sociohegemonic discourses.

Consequently, adherents to emancipatory Early Christian Studies need to equip its practitioners to become skilled in analyzing the kyriarchal and kyriocentric inscriptions of today as well as those at work in the biblical text. We need to learn how to produce and teach knowledge of Early Christian texts not simply for the sake of knowledge or just for mediating understanding, but rather for the sake of conscientization and the production of critical knowledge. In such a social analytic of dominations, I have argued here, a *status* rather than an *identity* model of social organization is appropriate. A kyriarchal status model of social analysis is able to examine the institutionalized structures and value patterns of domination for their effects on the relative status of social actors in a given society, even if these are

inscribed in literary texts. If such status inscriptions constitute persons as peers, capable of participating on a par with each other, then we can speak of status equality or grassroots democracy; if they do not do so, then we speak of domination.

Here, the distinction between a person's *structural position* and her *subject position* becomes important. Every individual is *structurally* positioned within social, cultural, economic, political, and religious systems by virtue of birth. No one chooses to be born white, black, Asian, European, multiracial, poor, healthy, male, or female. Persons find themselves always already positioned by and within kyriarchal structures of domination, which limit the chances they get in life.

In contrast, a *subject position* is variable, open to intervention and changeable, but also limited by hegemonic structures of domination. According to the theorists Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffé, "A 'subject position' refers to the ensemble of beliefs through which an individual interprets and responds to her structural positions within a social formation. In this sense, an individual becomes a social agent insofar as she lives her structural positions through an ensemble of subject positions."[32]

The relationship between a *subject position* and a *structural position* is quite complex since our self-understandings are always already determined by our *structural position* with its rewards and pressures. Thus, a person theoretically might be able to live her structural positions through a wide range of subject positions, but practically might be restricted to a rigidly defined and closed set of available interpretive frameworks. Hence, the importance of emancipatory movements and the different interpretive frameworks they engender.

Feminist critical theory has made a range of such interpretive frameworks and categories available for analyzing structural dominations that are shaping people's *subject positions*. It has provided various social analytics for diagnosing and changing wo/men's structural positions in and through the articulation of different *subject positions*. Readings of canonical texts or reconstructions of Christian beginnings

32. Anna Marie Smith, *Laclau and Mouffé: The Radical Democratic Imaginary* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 58–59.

can either sustain the status quo or can contribute to the articulation of different subject positions. Key analytic concepts and categories with which to read in a critical fashion have been developed either as reverse discourse to the binary intellectual framework of systemic dualisms or in a critical liberationist intersectional frame.

IV. Exploring the Intersections of Race, Gender, Status, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies

The essays in this volume engage in an intersectional analysis and thus seek to fashion Early Christian Studies as a discipline capable of articulating knowledge that does not reproduce the intersecting structures of domination but critically interrogates them. After this introductory essay, the first section of the book opens with an article by classics scholar Shelley P. Haley, who explores the reception and interaction of critical race theory in Classical Studies. Critical race theory had its beginnings in the scholarship of jurisprudence and in the sociological theory of social construction that developed in the 1970s as a response to the backlash and rollbacks of civil rights legislation. The application of such a theory to the study of the ancient world is justified, she argues, because the interpreters of ancient societies were or are intellectuals of nineteenth through twenty-first centuries and so have internalized (consciously or not) the values, structures, and behaviors that foster the need for critical race theory. Moreover, Roman society at the time of Augustus was multi-layered and complexly multicultural. As we discover the extent of that complexity, critical race theory can be useful in unlayering the intersectionality of the constructs of ancient Roman society.

Laura Nasrallah's essay unfolds the gendered and racial discourse in the "social life" of the statue of the Aphrodite of Knidos. Although scholars have long recognized that it is worth discussing the ancient Knidia's gender, this essay argues that it is also necessary to address her race. Early Christians, among others, critiqued images of the Aphrodite of Knidos not only by using the sexual invective of the day, but also by entering into a debate about the differential valuations of race in the ancient world.

Ancient writers recognized a world of ethnoracial diversity among the Jews of their era, Cynthia Baker argues. Yet, the notion of Jewish ethnic multiplicity remains foreign and virtually unexplored in popular and scholarly cultures that still labor under the weight of racialized discourses of Jewish "particularity" crafted as counterpoint to narratives of Christian "universalism." This essay investigates the varieties of "ethnic reasoning" brought to bear on imagining and constructing Jewishness within the multiethnic or multiracial community of Jews in antiquity.

The last two essays of the first section analyze texts and interpretations of Paul. Joseph Marchal investigates the frequency and the centrality of the rhetoric of "imitation" in Paul's letters. He suggests that Homi Bhabha's work on mimicry as a strategy in the negotiation of identity in postcolonial contexts could be a resource in recognizing and interrogating these rhetorics. Yet Bhabha's importance must be reassessed in light of the contributions of others such as Rey Chow and Meyda Yegenoglu. Marchal works toward a multiaxial analysis that includes gender, class, ethnicity, and empire, and thus provides a richer picture of historical possibilities in ancient Corinth, on the one hand, and tools for ongoing readings of the rhetoric of imitation within the letter on the other.

Since ethnicity is a construct, Sze-kar Wan suggests that Paul in Romans attempts to construct the Jewish *ethnos* by subverting and redefining prevailing ethnic categories used by his Roman audience. While Paul in Romans addresses Gentile converts, he incorporates them through code-switching into this expanded Jewish *ethnos*, changing their ethnic division "Greeks and Barbarians" into his own "Jews and Greeks" by focusing on circumcision as the central symbol of Jewishness. However, Paul defines Judaism in the exclusive terms of the male body. Thus, in deploying the arsenal he acquires under the empire for his construction of Jewish universalism, he also runs the risk of re-erecting an ideological *kyriarchal* edifice. On the surface, Paul could claim to have overcome the problem by his thoroughgoing allegorization, which enables him to distance Jewishness from the physical rite itself, but his final formulation of genuine faith cannot escape his male limitations.

The essays in the second part of the book focus on the capability of Early Christian Studies as a discipline to deploy an intersectional analytic of race, gender, and ethnicity. The contribution of Denise Kimber Buell suggests that haunting and inheritance are figures that can contribute to ethically engaged forms of New Testament and Early Christian Studies. Haunting offers readers a way to negotiate the insistence on situational particularity (for example, the widespread view that "race" is a "modern" construct, but also that "race," "ethnicity," and "gender" have only context-specific meanings), while also allowing us to consider the evidence for the "afterlives" of ancient texts and ideas. Inside and outside the canon, texts survive that presume that humans can be classified in terms of kinds of difference, including differences in *genos*, *ethnos*, and *laos*, as well as differences in gender, status, forms of religious worship, age, wealth, and other factors. Claims of peoplehood in texts *re-membered* as Christian are resources from which hegemonic religious, ethnic, national, and racial belonging have been constructed. But they also have been used to challenge and transform dominant meanings of race and ethnicity.

Shawn Kelley's essay in turn maintains that through aesthetic ideology, the racialization of much formative, historical-critical New Testament scholarship has taken place. While aesthetic ideology informs much of formative, historical-critical New Testament scholarship, its presence can be felt most acutely in parable scholarship. Parable scholarship became the gateway through which racialized aesthetics entered historical-critical biblical scholarship. Parable scholarship was the single aspect of historical criticism that maintained its appeal to those scholars who rejected historical criticism on methodological grounds. As a result, the methodological innovations of the past two decades simultaneously reinscribe aspects of parabolic-racialized discourse in new scholarly terrain (by embracing a parabolic aesthetic) and provide critical space for challenging racialized discourse within the discipline by developing alternative reading strategies and interpretive goals.

Susannah Heschel's essay provocatively asks: "Was Jesus a Nazi?" and argues that during the Third Reich, German Protestant theologians, motivated by racism and tapping into traditional Christian anti-Semitism, redefined Jesus as an Aryan and Christianity as a religion at

war with Judaism. In 1939, these theologians established the Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Religious Life. The surprisingly large number of distinguished professors, younger scholars, and students who became involved in the effort to synthesize Nazism and Christianity should be seen, she argues, not simply as a response to political developments, nor simply as an outgrowth of struggles within the field of Christian theology. Rather, the Institute reflects underlying affinities between racist ideology and Protestant Christian theology. In tracing the work of the Institute, its funding, publications, and membership activities, the emergence of a Nazi Christianity comes to light.

Gabriella Gelardini continues this inquiry by arguing that German-speaking Protestant historical Jesus research was caught in a real dilemma. From its very beginnings with Reimarus, such research had to grapple with the fact that Jesus was a Jew, which suited neither orthodox dogma nor modern Protestant theology's arrangement with historical criticism. In order to exercise theological control, scholars had to establish a conflictive tension between Jesus' "religion" and his "ethnicity" (or "nationality"). This was done in two distinct ways. First, Jesus was construed as a figure whose religion conflicted with or transcended his (Jewish) ethnicity or nationality, rendering negligible the latter aspect of his identity as merely external or formal. Second, when, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the non-dissoluble cohesion of Jesus' ancient ethnoreligious Jewish identity had to be acknowledged, the pattern shifted to (Christian) transethnic religion versus (Jewish) ethnoreligion (including the historical Jesus). Only a modern concept of individualism, Gelardini argues, was able to construct a historical Jesus along lines in which the nature of his "religion" could be distinguished or even separated from his "ethnicity."

Vincent L. Wimbush's essay in turn focuses on racism in the context of the United States. He aims to show how inextricably nationalization, Scriptures, and race as a modern world phenomena and dynamics are woven together and what problems, challenges, and consequences they hold for critical scholarship (including but going beyond scholarship on the Bible). With the United States as primary context and point of reference, the rhetorics as well as the ideological

and political orientation of Frederick Douglass is the special focus. Wimbush uses as an analytical wedge and discursive site a speech Douglass delivered in Washington, D.C., in 1883, in which he confronted the country with Lincoln's challenge to decide whether it would tolerate a society half slave and half free.

Drawing upon a number of philosophical and civic texts, religious exhortations, and exegetical treatises as well as the Bible, Douglass argued that the nation can and should be rebuilt, but only through serious and honest grappling with the poison of slavery and the racialism that is associated with it, and only if it is recognized that there is "no modern Joshua" to take the onus from the people of interpreting, deciding, and acting for themselves. Douglass's nationalization ideology suggests the challenge of a mode of discussion located in the public square and focused on the Bible precisely because the latter is the discursive site in relationship to which the most sensitive, even haunting, public policy issues can be addressed.

Fernando F. Segovia's study concludes the argument of the book for an intersectional analytic by highlighting, classifying, and explaining the poetics and rhetorics at work in minority biblical criticism within the United States of America. The study begins with a critical exposition of its own theoretical-methodological framework. Subsequently, it advances a working repertoire of minority rhetorical dynamics in which primary strategies (interpretive contextualization, border transgressionism, interruptive stock-taking, as well as intercultural engagement) and respective secondary tactics are identified and theorized. Segovia's study closes with both a critical vision regarding future lines of development for minority rhetorics and a return to the question of the ideological agenda behind the quest for a poetics of minority criticism.

The volume as a whole contributes to a rhetoric of inquiry and an ethic of interpretation[33] that seeks not only to deconstruct the kyriarchal structures of racism, heterosexism, ethnocentrism, and imperialism inscribed in early Christian writings and modern Early Christian

33. For elaboration and discussion of a rhetoric of inquiry and an ethic of interpretation, see my book *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.

Studies but also to find religious memories, resources, and visions for a more just world. With *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings*, we hope to open up an intellectual space for further exploration and inquiry not only into the kyriarchal intersections and prejudices inscribed in early Christian writings and beginnings but also in the possibilities for articulating elements of an early Christian and a scholarly ethos that fosters appreciation, tolerance, and justice.

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Edited by

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