

Subordination of wives in 1 Peter 3:1-7: an exegetical study

Introduction

The verb *ὑποτάσσω* ('subordinate') occupies a prominent place in the paranesis of 1 Peter. In particular, it dominates the author's instruction for Christian conduct in the political and domestic spheres, including his directions to Christian wives and husbands (3:1-7). Its use thereby illuminates his understanding of the relationship between the divine and social orders and the status of patriarchy within them.

This paper is a brief exegetical study of the meaning of *ὑποτάσσω* in 1 Peter 3:1-7. The first section provides a basic definition of the term with reference to the Greco-Roman concept of *τάξις*, the stratified ordering of nature and society. The next part identifies the historical and literary contexts of the passage and their implications for its rhetorical purpose. An exegesis is then provided of the two uses of *ὑποτάσσω* in 3:1 and 5. The final section of the paper draws some tentative and provisional conclusions regarding the author's understanding of the social and divine orders in general, and of patriarchy in particular, as revealed by these verses.

Definition

BDAG defines *ὑποτάσσω* in the active voice as 'to cause to be in a submissive relationship, *to subject, to subordinate*'. Its passive form means '*to become subject*' or '*to subject oneself, be subordinated, obey*'.¹ John Elliott points out that the verb is related to the noun *τάξις*, which means 'order', and argues that it presupposes the concept of a hierarchical natural and social order comprising relationships between superiors and inferiors:

The societies of the Greco-Roman period were greatly concerned with the establishment and maintenance of 'order' (*taxís*) in all areas of public and private life as a replication of an ordered universe (*kosmos*)... Superordination and subordination involved the acting out of statuses and roles determined by one's assigned place in the

¹ *BDAG*, 1042; italics original. The second passive sense has a middle force.

stratified social order... When the verb *hypotassō* and the noun *hypotagē* are used in ethical contexts, they denote recognition of and respect for authority and order, which involve submission, deference to, subjection to, and obedience to superiors, namely God and humans in positions of recognized authority.²

According to Elliott, the use of *ὑποτάσσω* in 1 Peter reflects this understanding of a structured society in which everyone has their own station, and in which these stations hold together and sustain the community's life. On this view, the author is calling his readers to subordinate themselves to their superiors within the established authority structures of the household and the state. Although the precise relationship in the author's mind between this social order and the divinely ordered nature of things (divine order) is open to debate, the concept and structures of Greco-Roman *τάξις* appear to be fundamental to his exhortation.³

In this context, the verb *ὑποτάσσω* is most naturally understood as one-sided, involving recognition, deference and obedience towards those in supposedly superior positions, a submission of oneself to their judgment and will. This conclusion is further supported by the restriction of the term by the author to those in the traditionally inferior positions, including wives.

Historical and literary contexts

In a historical context where women were seen as inherently deficient in comparison with men, wives were expected to be subordinate to their husbands. They were treated as socially inferior in society and the home, normally required to follow the religion of the head of the household, and not supposed to have friends

² J.H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 486-87. It is for this reason that Elliott favours the English translation of *ὑποτάσσω* as 'subordinate', a word that conveys the notion of order. Allan Barr's rejection of this translation on the grounds that it presupposes organisation (A. Barr, 'Submission Ethic in the First Epistle of Peter,' *HQ* 2:3 [1962]: 29) is thereby undermined; it is precisely for this reason that 'subordinate' *should* be used.

³ *BDAG*, 1042; *NIDNTTE* 4, 462; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 487; L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, ed. F. Hahn, trans. J.E. Alsup (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 183-84; J.B. Green, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 70-71; J.W. Thompson, "'Be Submissive to your Masters": A Study of 1 Peter 2:18-25,' *RQ* 9 (1966): 69.

independently of their husbands.⁴ These social conventions gave husbands considerable power to intimidate their wives.

The Christian conversion of wives with pagan husbands could therefore cause conflict within their households. They would refuse any longer to acknowledge the gods of the family cult, and would also become part of the Christian community, which was evidently mistrusted and whose message a husband might well reject with contempt.⁵ Some unbelieving husbands might bully their wives to turn them from their new faith. The household was also seen as the foundation of society, and a religious group that failed to respect its normative relationships was regarded as immoral and potentially seditious. The loyalty of Christians to the social order was thus called into question, and the stability of the Christian community threatened, by the conversion of wives.⁶

The verses of 1 Peter addressed to wives and husbands are part of a short code⁷ (2:13 – 3:12) for Christian conduct in the civil and domestic realms. Such codes originated in Greco-Roman culture, and set out the appropriate status, roles and relationships of different groups within the *οἶκος* ('household') and *πόλις* (city-state). The codes were designed to maintain order and harmony in these two spheres, and conformity to them was regarded as a mark of good citizenship.⁸

⁴ P.J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 206-7; Green, *1 Peter*, 92; K.H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 185-86, 203; R. Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, trans. P.H. Davids (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 178.

⁵ D.A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP and Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 855-56; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 208; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 219; F.W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 127; B.J. Bauman-Martin, 'Women on the Edge: New Perspectives on Women in the Petrine *Haustafeln*,' *JBL* 123 (2004): 265-67, 270-72.

⁶ D.L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1981), 118-19; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 558-59; P.H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 115-16; J.R. Michaels, *1 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 157; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 179, 202-3; Bauman-Martin, 'Women,' 264-65, 267-68; P.H. Davids, 'A Silent Witness in Marriage: 1 Peter 3:1-7,' in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. R.W. Pierce and R.M. Groothuis (Downers Grove and Leicester: IVP and Apollos, 2004), 226.

⁷ The word 'code' should not be taken to imply a fixed form. John Elliott has argued that there was 'a long-standing Greco-Roman tradition of instruction concerning appropriate behavior relevant to the two major domains of ancient society: the civil sphere (*polis*) and the related domestic sphere (*oikos*)' (Elliott, *1 Peter*, 505), and that individual collections of teaching are particular expressions of this flexible tradition (Elliott, *1 Peter*, 506-10).

⁸ D.L. Balch, 'Hellenization/Acculturation in 1 Peter,' in *Perspectives on 1 Peter*, ed. C.H. Talbert (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1986), 81-82; J.H. Elliott, '1 Peter, Its Situation and

These historical and literary contexts suggest that one purpose of 3:1-7 is to counter the intimidation and change the attitude of hostile husbands and other outsiders. By being subordinate to their husbands, Christian wives can avoid unnecessary charges and answer those who accuse them of being socially and politically disruptive. By 'doing good' in this way the community will silence their critics (2:15), and submissive wives may even win their husbands to the faith (3:1-2).⁹ These verses thus offer a strategy for deflecting anti-Christian antagonism¹⁰ and promoting the church's mission.

However, the instruction to wives to be subordinate to their husbands is not necessarily a purely or even mainly pragmatic device for the purpose of community self-preservation and growth.¹¹ It may also reflect what the author regards as a universal ethic governing the relationship of married couples, requiring from the wives (and husbands) not a merely contingent accommodation to the *social* order, but rather a necessary conformity to the *divine* order that will also have beneficial social effects. This issue cannot be decided simply by reference to the context and form of the text; it depends also, and more importantly, on the interpretation of its content.

Strategy: A Discussion with David Balch,' in *Perspectives on 1 Peter*, ed. C.H. Talbert (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1986), 62-63; Green, *1 Peter*, 70-71.

⁹ Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 208; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 204; J.W. Aageson, 'Slaves, Wives and the Complexities of Interpretation,' in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles*, ed. A-J Levine and M.M. Robbins (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 42.

¹⁰ G. Forster, *Ethics in the Letters of Peter and Jude* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2007), 22-23; Feldmeier, *First Letter*, 152-57; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 179; S.R. Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community and Christology in 1 Peter* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 188-89. However, there is no evidence from the letter that Christian wives were pursuing an expanded role, within the church or outside it, on the basis of their Christian faith (Balch, *Wives*, 106-7). The claims of Jennifer Bird (J.G. Bird, *Abuse, Power and Fearful Obedience: Reconsidering 1 Peter's Commands to Wives* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2013]) that 'the author is pulling in the reins [sic] on active, powerful and influential wives/women' (136) and 'the women have been vocal and influential' (137), while not impossible, do not follow from the instructions given to the wives.

¹¹ *Contra* A.G. Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 81-82.

Exegesis

3:1ff.

The opening word of the new section, Ὀμοίως ('Likewise'), links it to the previous one. Like 2:18-25, the instructions to wives in 3:1-6 are a further application of the general command to subordination in 2:13. This conclusion is reinforced by the use of an imperatival participle, ὑποτασσόμεναι ('be subordinate').¹² The phrase αἱ γυναῖκες ('you wives') is a nominative used as a vocative, possibly emphasising the unusual direct address to wives in a household code. This assumes that the author regards them as fully human, rational, and capable of independent moral judgment and behaviour, in just the same way as the husbands.¹³ The object of the imperative, τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ('to your own husbands'), makes clear that wives (rather than women generally) are in view. They are to subordinate themselves to their own husbands, recognising the husbands' (supposedly) superior status and showing them deference and obedience.¹⁴

The implication of καὶ εἴ τινες ἀπειθοῦσιν τῷ λόγῳ ('even if some disobey the word') is that some of the women were married to pagans, while the reference to the latter's disobeying the word suggests that they had rejected and perhaps actively opposed the gospel of Christ. The instruction to wives to be subordinate to their husbands therefore furthers one aim of the civic and household code: silencing the ignorance of the foolish by doing good in the eyes of society and encouraging the conversion of their unbelieving husbands (ἵνα ... κερδηθήσονται; 'in order that ... they may be gained').¹⁵

¹² Achtemeier (*1 Peter*, 209) prefers to see this as an instrumental participle; there is no real difference in meaning.

¹³ Green, *1 Peter*, 80; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 513; Davids, *First Epistle*, 105, 116; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 185; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 193, 219.

¹⁴ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 157, 167; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 209; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 553-54.

¹⁵ Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 209-10; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 157; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 557-58; Green, *1 Peter*, 94-95; Balch, *Wives*, 99; W.J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 106-7; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 204; A.B. Spencer, 'Peter's Pedagogical Method in 1 Peter 3:6.' *BBR* 10 (2000): 109, 111; J. Punt, 'Subverting Sarah in the New Testament: Galatians 4 and 1 Peter 3,' in *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality: Exegetical Studies*, vol. 2, ed. C.A. Evans and H.D. Zacharias (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 164.

The disobedient husbands may be won over *διὰ τῆς τῶν γυναικῶν ἀναστροφῆς* ('through the conduct of the wives'). Good conduct by the wives in everyday domestic life will relieve the husbands' fear of disruption in the home. This conduct is also to be *ἄνευ λόγου* ('without a word'): the wives' words in support of the gospel might be more provocative than helpful in a context where husbands (and wider society) regard their silence as virtuous. But in the following verse it is further defined in terms of purity motivated by fear, suggesting that the author envisages a close correlation between what society (at its best) regards as good and the will of God. Purity is indeed an answer to actual or potential charges of immorality, but it is also proper before God; and the fear is probably fear of God, which should prompt the wives to appropriate subordination.¹⁶

This appeal implies that the required subordination of wives is not absolute; where God's requirements conflict with those of the husband, the former must take priority. However, it is notable that the author never states this principle explicitly, suggesting that he believes there will be few instances where subordination is inappropriate.¹⁷

In verses 3-4 the author further expounds the nature of good conduct in terms of a contrast between perishable external adornment and imperishable inward character. The outward braiding of hair and wearing of ornaments and clothing are to be rejected in favour of a gentle and peaceable spirit. Once more, this lifestyle is virtuous according to both Greco-Roman and Christian moral standards: it will be

¹⁶ Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 210; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 157-58; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 558-59; Green, *1 Peter*, 95-96; Beare, *First Epistle*, 128; Balch, *Wives*, 99-101; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 204; Feldmeier, *First Letter*, 178-80; L.R. Donelson, *I and II Peter and Jude: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 89. Many commentators suggest that in 1 Peter only God is the appropriate object of *φόβος* (except in the LXX citation in 3:14); see for example Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 188; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 500; Davids, *First Epistle*, 104.

¹⁷ He does not even say that the wives should not worship their household's gods, and Warren Carter does not allow even this exception to the principle of subordination (W. Carter, 'Going All the Way? Honoring the Emperor and Sacrificing Wives and Slaves in 1 Peter 2:13 – 3:6,' in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles*, ed. A-J Levine and M.M. Robbins [London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004], 23-30). But there is good reason to think that this prohibition is taken for granted; see D.G. Horrell, 'Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliott Debate towards a Postcolonial Reading of 1 Peter,' in *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013) for a critique of Carter's interpretation.

effective in appeasing husbands and answering societal slanders, but also it is explicitly said to be very precious before God.¹⁸

3:5ff.

The author again uses the participial form of *ὑποτάσσω* to define the conduct he is prescribing. He justifies his previous call for inward adornment by appealing to *αἱ ἅγαι γυναῖκες αἱ ἐλπίζουσαι εἰς θεὸν* ('the holy women who hoped in God'). This is a reference to OT women, perhaps especially or exclusively the matriarchs from Genesis, who are ancient and authoritative examples for the conduct of Christian wives.¹⁹ These women used to decorate themselves internally by subordinating themselves to their own husbands.²⁰ The Christian wives' inner disposition of gentleness and quietness is to be expressed in the same way.²¹

The particular OT woman used by the author as an example of subordination is Sarah (v.6), wife of Abraham the patriarch.²² She is said to have obeyed her husband by calling him 'lord'.²³ The present participle *καλοῦσα* ('calling') may indicate a habitual address, but any specific reference is most likely to Genesis 18:12.²⁴ For the author, Sarah's use of *κύριος* ('lord') implies her submission to

¹⁸ Balch, *Wives*, 101-2; Davids, 'Witness,' 229-31; Spencer, 'Method,' 111-12. Bird (*Abuse*, 137) suggests that the instructions regarding clothing and adornment are designed to differentiate the women from leadership figures in priesthood and nation who would dress in elaborate attire. But there are no references to such figures in the text, or any evidence that fine clothing was associated with leadership *within* the Christian community.

¹⁹ Elliott, *1 Peter*, 568; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 164.

²⁰ In this instance the participle is certainly adverbial, and it could be one of means (indicating how the action was done) or one of result (denoting the outcome of the action) (D.B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996], 627-30, 637-39).

²¹ Michaels, *1 Peter*, 163-64; J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (London: A. & C. Black Limited, 1969), 130; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 213-14; Feldmeier, *First Letter*, 181-82; Donelson, *Commentary*, 92. Beare (*First Epistle*, 130) suggests that for the readers the OT women replaced the Greek and Roman heroes whom they would previously have taken as examples.

²² Balch, appealing to Philo, points out that Sarah was also supposed to be the first woman proselyte and to have led Abraham to know God (Balch, *Wives*, 105). Punt's view ('Sarah,' 165-66) that Sarah is an example of marriage to an abusive husband seems unlikely to be that of 1 Peter in the absence of explicit indications in the text.

²³ The participle here is taken as an adverbial participle of means. The (or one) way in which Sarah expressed her obedient subordination to Abraham was by calling him 'lord'.

²⁴ Because this verse does not show Sarah obviously in subordination to Abraham (she is referring to him rather than addressing him, and is laughing at the LORD's promise of a son), some scholars have looked for an alternative LXX reference. For example, Aida Besançon Spencer ('Method,' 112-19) has proposed Genesis 12:11-20, drawing various analogies between the story of the couple's stay in Egypt and the position of the Christian wives in 1 Peter. She suggests that the author uses Sarah as an example of Christ-like vicarious suffering, who chooses to save her husband's life. Although this is an ingenious and attractive proposal (which is also propounded in a slightly different form by Green, 1

Abraham's authority, and emphasises the peace and harmony that he is seeking to promote within the readers' households.²⁵ While 3:6 may thus present Sarah as 'an ideal Hellenistic wife' whose virtue is to be imitated by Christian wives,²⁶ her status as the mother of God's people implies that she is also the trans-cultural archetype for godly women.

Through their conversion, the Christian wives have become the daughters of Sarah within the people of God. But they must demonstrate and maintain that relationship by continuing to do good (*ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι*)²⁷ and not to fear intimidation by hostile husbands. Thus once more the author enjoins them to conduct that both God and society approve; by subordinating themselves as God requires they can hope to defuse any hostility in the home. But in case they do not,²⁸ he also warns them against being intimidated by their husbands, presumably into compromising or abandoning their faith under the pressure of disapproval.²⁹

The command for subordination in 3:1 is not addressed only to wives with pagan husbands, but to Christian wives without distinction. So the brief instruction to Christian husbands in 3:7 sheds light on what the author regards as the appropriate context of that subordination within a marriage between Christians. It may be seen as an outworking of the general precept in 2:17 to honour all people; in their life together the husband is to recognise the status of his wife and to respect her accordingly.

Peter, 96-97), any connection between the phrase *κύριον αὐτὸν καλοῦσα* and Genesis 12 seems too obscure to be intentional. Others have accepted Genesis 18:12 as the referent, but have interpreted the text differently; for instance, Lewis Donelson (*Commentary*, 92) argues that Sarah's calling Abraham 'lord' may connote her hiding her true self and laughing. This appears an unlikely allusion in light of 1 Peter's concern to encourage order and harmony in the household.

²⁵ Balch, *Wives*, 103-5; Feldmeier, *First Letter*, 182.

²⁶ Davids, 'Witness,' 234; also Punt, 'Sarah,' 163-64, drawing on D.I. Sly '1 Peter 3:6b in the light of Philo and Josephus,' *JBL* 110/1 (1991): 129.

²⁷ The meaning of this verb is controversial, but it is commonly acknowledged to denote conduct that conforms to *both* God's will *and* what is socially approved. This dual view is stated explicitly by Michaels, *1 Peter*, 126; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 492; and Jobes, *1 Peter*, 175-76.

²⁸ This part of the verse is illuminated by the similar but more general idea in 3:13-14: *Καὶ τίς ὁ κακῶσων ὑμᾶς ἐάν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ζηλωταὶ γένησθε; ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε διὰ δικαιοσύνην, μακάριοι. τὸν δὲ φόβον αὐτῶν μὴ φοβηθῆτε μηδὲ παραχθῆτε.* By their subordination, the wives will *as a rule* keep themselves out of trouble with their unbelieving husbands; *in some cases* they may not, but then they are not to be afraid.

²⁹ Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 224-25; Beare, *First Epistle*, 130-31; Donelson, *Commentary*, 93-94; Balch, *Wives*, 105; Davids, 'Witness,' 234.

On the one hand, this means acknowledging the wife as an *ἀσθενεστέρως σκεῦος* ('weaker vessel') and treating her with the appropriate consideration as such. This may be a reference to the woman's supposedly weaker nature, or more specifically to her generally weaker physical body, or merely to her lower social status.³⁰ On the other hand, it means seeing the wife as sharing with him in God's gift of life and giving her the corresponding esteem. His failure to do this will hinder their prayers. The whole clause, while affirming that husbands too are to respect the social order in which women have an inferior place, also implies a measure of equality between husband and wife within the divine order, which will inevitably affect their experience of super- and subordination.³¹

Implications

Only cautious and interim conclusions may be drawn regarding the author's view of the relationship between the divine and social orders, and of patriarchy, solely from his use of *ὑποτάσσω* in 3:1-7. The following comments are therefore no more than an agenda for further enquiry.

On the one hand, the current ordering of social relationships is never explicitly said here (or elsewhere in 1 Peter) to be ordained by God. Perhaps the author's awareness of the social order's imperfections, evidenced by the sufferings of his readers, prevented him from identifying it too closely with the divine order. But in practice this means only that subordination is not meant to be absolute, as shown in the appeal here to purity and fear of God as primary motivations for it.³²

On the other hand, the idea that 1 Peter presents social relationships as entirely contingent may not give sufficient weight to the degree of *coincidence* presumed here between the demands of society and the requirements of God. This is seen in

³⁰ Elliott, *1 Peter*, 2000, 576-78; Kelly, *Commentary*, 133; Green, *1 Peter*, 100.

³¹ Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 217-18; Davids, 'Witness,' 237-38; Punt, 'Sarah,' 163; Forster, *Ethics*, 22; E. Kamlah, "ὑποτάσσεσθαι in den Neutestamentlichen "Haustafeln", in *Verborum Veritas: Festschrift für Gustav Stählin zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. O. Böcher and K. Haacker (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970), 242-43.

³² Jobes, *1 Peter*, 181; Donelson, *Commentary*, 89; Davids, 'Witness,' 228; *contra* TDNT 43.

the use of *ἀγαθοποιέω* ('do good'), in the commendation for wives of qualities such as purity and gentleness that are pleasing to God and society (3:2,4), and in the author's apparent assumption that subordination to husbands will rarely be inappropriate. Thus even if for 1 Peter the social order is not *ordained* by God and *identical* with the divine order, it could still be largely *approved* by God and *reflective* of the divine order.

It is widely acknowledged that the subordination of wives in 1 Peter has both an apologetic and a missionary purpose. Respect for the superior position of husbands is clearly intended to reduce hostility to wives and the whole Christian community, within the home and society generally; this process may extend even to the husbands' conversion. It is possible therefore to see the call to wifely subordination as purely pragmatic.³³

But arguably such a view fails to take sufficient account of evidence that the author regards subordination of wives to husbands as appropriate not only within the social order, but also within the divine order. The explicit statement that a wife's gentle and quiet spirit is very precious before God (3:4), and the appeal to the example of OT women, specifically Sarah (3:5-6), can both be taken to imply divine endorsement of some form of patriarchy; so also, though more doubtfully, can the description of the woman as an *ἀσθενεστέρως σκεῦος* ('weaker vessel'; 3:7a). Certainly there are also features that point to equality: the direct address to wives in the same form as to husbands (3:1), and the call to Christian husbands to honour their wives as co-heirs of life (3:7b). But this equality at least appears to co-exist alongside a continuing subordination of wives to husbands that is not merely a prudential concession to current social realities, but also something expected by God.

It may therefore be best to take the calls to subordination in 3:1-7 as a modification rather than a subversion of the patriarchal ordering of the Greco-Roman household. The changes are significant: subordination is not absolute; it is shaped by Christian norms; it is balanced by an element of equality; and it is motivated partly by

³³ See for example Padgett, *Christ Submits*, 82-84.

apologetic and missionary concerns.³⁴ But these seem not to amount to a rejection of the established order, or even its reduction to a purely contingent human construct to be respected only for pragmatic reasons. The partial grounding of subordination in divine as well as social norms may reflect the author's view of a social order that, while not sanctified by God, is nonetheless generally approved by God.

³⁴ See Elliott, *1 Peter*, 552, 556-57 and Punt, 'Sarah,' 159-60, 163-64, 173.

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Abbreviations

General

LXX	Septuagint
OT	Old Testament

Books, journals and series

<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin of Biblical Research</i>
<i>BDAG</i>	Danker, F.W., ed. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
GES	Grove Ethics Series
<i>HQ</i>	<i>Hartford Quarterly</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
NABPRSSS	National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Special Studies Series
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTTE</i>	Silva, M., ed. <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
NTL	The New Testament Library
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>TDNT</i>	Kittel, G. and Friedrich, G., eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . 10 vols. Translated by G.W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-84.
THNTC	The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary