Translating ὑποτάσσεσθαι in 1 Peter as "Fitting In," Not as "Submission"

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Abstract: Biblical translators almost always render the verb ὑποτάσσεσθαι and its cognates in 1 Peter with submission or subordination language. Thus, this verb and its word group are perceived only as a vice by most modern readers. In the Petrine author's linguistic world, however, this verb and its cognates designate either the vice of submission or the virtue of integrating oneself into a divine reality. Ancient authors frequently discuss this virtue and vice in contexts of competing moral obligations. When an inferior moral demand conflicts with a superior divine obligation, this verb requires resistance and even insubordination, not submission. In such a context, this verb cannot be accurately rendered with submission language, which allows for no resistance, and this verb and its cognates are rather more precisely translated as "fit in" in all five ethical uses of ὑποτάσσεσθαι as a virtue in 1 Peter (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5; 5:5).

Key Terms: emperor, family, "fit in," husbands, submission, ὑποτάσσεσθαι, vice, virtue, wives

LIKE SO MANY OTHER ethical terms in the Greek language, ὑποτάσσεσθαι designates either a virtue or a vice. In his classic study of this term, Ehrhard Kamlah identifies two basic meanings as *unter etwas einreihen* ("to arrange or put in a proper place under something") and *nachordnen* ("to subordinate").[1] The first of these two meanings relates to virtue while the second concerns vice. Epictetus uses this term to describe the vice of submitting oneself to others to procure unnecessary goods and services not under one's own control (ὑποτεταχέναι, *Diatr.* 1.4.19; ὑποτεταγμένους, 4.4.1). He explains that this vice results from being overpowered by

1 Ehrhard Kamlah, "'Υποτάσσεσθαι in den neutestamentlichen 'Haustafeln,'" in *Verborum Veritas: Festschrift für Gustav Stählin zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Otto Böcher and Klaus Hacker (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970), 237–43, here 238.

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pleasure, wealth, fame, and other such things under the control of others (ὑποτέτακται, *Diatr.* 3.24.71). Repeatedly, he equates this vice of submission to slavery (ὑποτεταχέναι, *Diatr.* 1.4.19; ὑπετάγης, 4.4.33; cf. 4.4.38) and asks, "Therefore, the person of whom pleasure is not the master, nor pain, nor fame, nor wealth, but [who] is able to die whenever it seems good to him or her after spitting her or his small little body contemptuously at someone—whose slave is this person any longer, to whom has this person submitted [τίνι ὑποτέτακται]?" (*Diatr.* 3.24.71).[2] In contrast to the vice, Epictetus uses various forms of ὑποτάσσεσθαι to describe the virtue of fitting in with divine ordinances that enable one to seize control of one's own life (ὑποτεταγμένον, *Diatr.* 4.3.12). He deems it a virtue to fit in with divine plans and purposes (ὑποτετάχθαι, *Diatr.* 4.12.11). According to Epictetus, this virtue of fitting in with the divine enables one to fit in with oneself (*Diatr.* 4.12.12), with society (*Diatr.* 4.12.15), and ultimately with the entire universe (*Diatr.* 4.12.16–18). For Epictetus and for Hellenistic and Roman ethics more broadly, the term ὑποτάσσεσθαι designates either the vice of improper servile, abject submission, or the virtue of a self-determination to fit properly into any and every situation.

Apparently unaware or intentionally ignoring the ability of this term to designate virtue or vice in the Petrine author's culture, Bible translators, interpreters, and proclaimers almost universally render ὑποτάσσεσθαι exclusively as a vice and translate it with various forms of the submission word group.[3] Jennifer G. Bird and Warren Carter are representative examples. Bird interprets the Petrine author as urging slaves and wives to submit silently to masters and husbands (2:18–3:6), and she comments,

2 The translations of ancient texts are my own unless otherwise specified. For convenience, the author of 1 Peter is designated as Peter with the understanding that this text is considered pseudonymous by many recent interpreters.

3 See John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 487. Elliott criticizes this translation tradition and comments that subordination language is preferable to submission language. Elliott, however, explains that subordination language denotes "recognition of and respect for authority and order, which involve submission, deference to, subjection to, and obedience to superiors" (487). He also explains, "The kind of subordination ... that Christian slaves ... render to their owners is obedience ... and submission" (516). Elliott's preference for subordination language, therefore, is not really an alternative to the submission translation tradition that he criticizes. Furthermore, the virtue designated by ὑποτάσσεσθαι often requires resistance and insubordination in contexts of conflicting moral obligations, but Elliott does not consider the use of this term as a virtue in such contexts. See also Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 136. Grudem notes an exception to this universal translation tradition and comments, "Sometimes the word *hypotassō* ('be submissive') has been understood to mean 'be thoughtful and considerate; act in love' (toward another)." Nevertheless, he rejects these proposals as not providing an adequate meaning for ὑποτάσσεσθαι, which he maintains always denotes submission language. See also Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 154–55.

"The very fact that part of the problem was mistreatment at the hands of spouses or masters makes the command to quietly submit ... an abusive command."[4] She deems the author an unethical moralist but somewhat exonerates him by noting that he urges the vice of submission to superiors "for expediency and the survival of the Christian movement."[5] Carter also interprets the command to submit as expedient for the viability of Christian communities addressed by the letter but does not attempt to exonerate the author. Rather, Carter accuses him of throwing these domestics and wives "under the bus" and of advising them to cower before the brute force of their masters and husbands.[6] Both Carter and Bird and almost everyone else as well thus interpret ὑποτάσσεσθαι in 1 Peter as a vice and do not even consider the ancient use of this term as a virtue.

The Virtue and Vice of ΥΠΟΤΑΣΣΕΣΘΑΙ in Classical Culture

Long before Epictetus began using ὑποτάσσεσθαι as a term of virtue or vice, classical authors were busy defining and describing the vice of submission and the virtue of fitting in with divine reality. Perhaps the most well-known treatment is that of Sophocles in his dramatic tragedy *Antigone*. The backdrop of this play is the unsuccessful Argive attack on the city of Thebes in which the brothers Eteocles, who led the Thebans, and Polynices, the Argive leader, have killed one another. Their uncle Creon assumes the throne and orders a state burial for Eteocles but forbids anyone from burying Polynices (Sophocles, *Ant.* 21–30, 191–210). The sisters of these two brothers are Antigone, who personifies the virtue of fitting in with the divine, and Ismene, who models the vice of submission.

4 Jennifer G. Bird, *Abuse, Power, and Fearful Obedience: Reconsidering 1 Peter's Commands to Wives*, LNTS 442 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 91, cf. 94–96.

5 Bird, *Abuse, Power, and Fearful Obedience*, 108.

6 Warren 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. Amy-Jill Levine and Maria Mayo Robbins (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 14–33. For a critique of Carter, see David G. Horrell, "Between Conformity and Resistance: Beyond the Balch-Elliott Debate towards a Postcolonial Reading of First Peter," in *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter*, ed. Robert L. Webb and Betsy Bauman-Martin, LNTS 364 (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 111–43, here 134–37; and Sean du Toit, "Practising Idolatry in 1 Peter," *JSNT* 43 (2021): 411–30. From Pliny's *Epistula* 10.96, du Toit notes, "A real Christian ... *cannot*: (1) invoke the gods, (2) worship the emperor and (3) curse Christ" (416). Du Toit concludes, "While 1 Peter offers advice for these Christians about coping and negotiating opposition to reduce their suffering, practicing idolatry is not a strategy offered to them. Rather, they are to embrace a holy life (1.13–16) following in the footsteps of their Lord (2.21), in exclusive devotion to God (4.11)" (426–27).

Sophocles uses this opening dialogue between these sisters to contrast the vice of submission with the virtue of fitting in. After informing her sister that Creon has decreed death for anyone attempting to bury Polynices, Antigone explains to Ismene that she will exhibit in this situation either virtue (εὐγενής) or vice (κακή, *Ant.* 37–38). Antigone then declares her intent to bury her brother in defiance of the king's order and invites her sister to join her. Ismene declines this invitation and states her intention to submit to the king because of fear of what will happen if she does not, because she is a woman while he is a man, because she is weak while he is powerful, and because it is senseless to resist but forgivable to acquiesce (*Ant.* 49–68). In this opening dialogue, Antigone demonstrates the virtue of a courageous moral agent who honors not only her sibling obligations but also the unwritten moral laws of the gods (*Ant.* 69–77). Her actions please those whom it is more necessary to please (*Ant.* 89). Ismene tries to dissuade Antigone by calling her course of action impossible (*Ant.* 90), improper (*Ant.* 92), and foolish (*Ant.* 99), but Antigone steadfastly determines to avoid Ismene's submissive vice and to act virtuously by defying the king and burying her brother according to divine directive.

When confronted by Creon, Antigone freely admits her transgression (ὑπερβαίνειν) of his decree because it was neither Zeus nor Dike who promulgated this decree (*Ant.* 450–52). She further explains that she does not deem his decree powerful enough to overrule the unwritten, steadfast, and eternal proclamations of the gods (*Ant.* 453–457). She informs the king that when divine and human laws conflict, she fears divine punishment more than human and therefore determines to fit in with divine law by not submitting to his (*Ant.* 458–468). She states, "If I seem now to you to be acting a fool, I dare say I am condemned a fool by a fool" (*Ant.* 469–470). The chorus then emphasizes that Antigone is of a hardy and virtuous stock that knows not how to submit (εἴκειν) to evil men (*Ant.* 471–472).

In the end, Antigone's deeds are deemed glorious and worthy of honor by the people of Thebes (*Ant.* 695, 699) while even Creon's own son regards his father's actions as unjust (*Ant.* 743). Only the intervention of the blind prophet Tiresias convinces Creon to realize he has condemned the pious of impiety and to reverse course of action and spare Antigone's life (*Ant.* 988–1090). Creon's realization that he has been fighting against the gods, however, comes too late (*Ant.* 1105–1106, cf. 1270). With her virtuous life conformed to the divine purpose and plan, Antigone dies a noble death while Ismene must live with the knowledge of her vice in submitting to Creon's unjust decree (*Ant.* 536–560; cf. 771). For his part, Creon suffers divine retribution for not fitting in with the will of the gods as his future daughter-in-law Antigone and both his son and his wife commit suicide. Creon's grief is deepened by the realization that his ruin has come from his

own folly (*Ant.* 1257–1346). The moralizing epilogue voiced by the chorus emphasizes the virtue and good sense of fitting in with the gods and the impious vice of resisting their intentions and submitting to evil humans (*Ant.* 1348–1353).

Sophocles does not use the term ὑποτάσσεσθαι in his tragic drama, but he nevertheless describes several characteristics of the virtue and vice later designated by this term. The virtue is to fear divine power and retribution more than those of humans, and the vice is to do the opposite. The virtue is to value divine pronouncements more highly than contrary human ones, while the vice is again to do the opposite. The practice of this virtue confronts errant human authorities with the folly of being outside the divine purpose and even of fighting against the divine so that they may change course and assume their appropriate place in the divine reality. These characteristics described by Sophocles persist into the Hellenistic and Roman ages as authors continue to refine and develop the virtue and vice eventually designated by the term ὑποτάσσεσθαι.

The Virtue and Vice of ΥΠΟΤΑΣΣΕΣΘΑΙ in the Hellenistic and Roman Ages

The exploration of the virtue and vice designated by ὑποτάσσεσθαι is wide-ranging among Hellenistic and Roman writers, but authors in Peter's own faith tradition are the most relevant for understanding the use of this term in 1 Peter.[7] For example, the author of the book of Esther describes how this heroine demonstrates the virtue of fitting in and avoids the vice of submitting. Esther fits in so well that she becomes queen of the Persian Empire (Esth 2:17). When Haman incites her husband the king to sign a law contrary to God's sovereignty (Esth 3:12–15), Esther risks her life to

7 For example, Dio Chrysostom uses various forms of ὑποτάσσεσθαι to argue that this term does not always designate a vice (*1 Serv. Lib.* 3–8 = *Or.* 14.3–8). He describes the virtue of a member of a chorus fitting in with the direction of the leader, of a passenger on a ship complying with the directions of the captain, of a soldier in an army keeping good order by fitting in with officers, and of a sick person fitting in by following the prescriptions of a physician. See especially the Stoic theory of action described and discussed by Brent D. Shaw, "The Divine Economy: Stoicism as Ideology," *Latomus* 64 (1985): 16–54; and Elizabeth A. Cochran, "Virtuous Assent and Christian Faith: Retrieving Stoic Virtue Theory for Christian Ethics," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 30 (2010): 117–40. Cochran explains, "Stoic ethics can be understood largely in terms of assent to providence as a fundamental moral task that encapsulates the nature of a virtuous life. Virtue, for the Stoics, begins with apprehension of indicators of divine goodness providentially at work in the world. Upon recognizing the goodness of providence, a virtuous disposition approves this goodness and demonstrates that approval by adopting a stance of assent" (120). Her description of Stoic ethics and especially the idea that the "fundamental moral task" is assent to providence are consonant with Peter's virtue of fitting in with the divine.

thwart the plot. Her request for all the Jews to fast for her emphasizes her intense inner struggle to obey God against Haman and the king. Nevertheless, she resolutely fits in with God's direction and resigns herself to the penalty for opposing them and simply says, "If I perish, I perish" (Esth 4:10–17). With God's help, not only does she survive but her people also escape harm, and the authority figures who opposed God either capitulate to God's way or are destroyed (Esth 7:1–9:20). In this situation of conflicting moral obligations, Esther fits in with her husband by resisting his wayward decree, and her actions bring him to his senses so that he can fit in with the divine reality as well. Even though not specifically using the term ὑποτάσσεσθαι, this author nevertheless explores and describes the virtue and vice it designates.

Another example is the author of the book of Daniel. He describes how Daniel and his three friends fit into their exilic situation in Babylon. They accommodate themselves whenever they can, learn the Chaldean language, and are educated in Chaldean customs to serve in the king's palace (Dan 1:3–7). Even though they largely accommodate, they resist pressures to conform when human authority figures contravene God's supreme authority (Dan 1:8). Thus, they refuse to eat the king's rich food and respectfully request permission to eat vegetables instead (Dan 1:8). They fit in so well that the king finds them ten times better than anyone else to serve him (Dan 1:17–21). Nevertheless, they resist the king when he steps outside of his proper authority. So, Daniel refuses to submit to the king's decree (οὐχ ὑπετάγη τῷ δόγματί; Dan 6:14 Th) but prays to God in direct disobedience to the king's demand to pray only to himself (Dan 6:1–15). Daniel's three friends likewise refuse to submit to the king and worship his idol (Dan 3:1–18). Of course, they all suffer punishment (Dan 3:19–23; 6:16–18), but God delivers them, and their fitting in rather than submitting to the king's errant demands forces these human authorities to recognize their proper place under God's supreme authority (Dan 3:24–30; 6:19–28).[8]

Yet another example is the author of Second Maccabees. He narrates how Antiochus IV tries to force Jews to submit to his unrighteous decrees and how he persecutes them relentlessly when they refuse. As he faces his

8 See Cochran, "Virtuous Assent and Christian Ethics," 123. She observes that for the Stoics, moral "acts are right when they accord with right reason," which perceives the universe and providence correctly. She further observes that for the Stoics, "God has instilled reason into us so that we may act virtuously, and our reason guides us toward virtue through understanding and judging our sensory impressions of the material world.... Assent is not simply submission to a given state of affairs; it is instead an expression of faith and trust that God is providentially at work in the world and seeks to bring about its good" (124). While this Stoic view may not be exactly the same, it is nevertheless compatible in many ways with the biblical view described here.

own death, however, Antiochus realizes the error of his ways and confesses that it is right and virtuous to fit in with God (ὑποτάσσεσθαι τῷ θεῷ) rather than submit to an errant human authority (2 Macc 9:12). In the end, Antiochus realizes that the Jews who resisted him were not only fitting in with God but also with himself to bring him back to his proper place in God's reality. The author of this book thus uses the term ὑποτάσσεσθαι to express the virtue of fitting in with God and establishes that the Jews were exhibiting this virtue by resisting Antiochus and his ungodly demands.

This Maccabean author, the authors of Esther and Daniel, and many other authors as well describe the precarious situations in which God's people find themselves as they attempt to negotiate the delicate balance of being accountable to a human authority who steps outside of God's supreme authority. In such situations of competing moral obligations, all these authors recommend that God's people adhere tenaciously to the principle that God's kingship and authority are superior to any earthly king or human authority. These authors consequently advocate that God's people fit in with God's direction rather than submitting to human authorities who do not. By resisting these errant human authorities, God's people fit in with them by maintaining their proper place in God's reality and confronting these authorities to assume their proper place as well.[9] The Maccabean author and these other authors thus contribute to the understanding and conception of the virtue of fitting in with God and with human authorities legitimated by God and of the vice of submitting to illegitimate ones. These and other Hellenistic and Roman authors in Peter's faith tradition inform Peter's use of ὑποτάσσεσθαι in his letter.

The Virtue of ΥΠΟΤΑΣΣΕΣΘΑΙ in 1 Peter

Peter uses ὑποτάσσεσθαι in an ethical sense five times in his letter, but each time he carefully stipulates that it designates a virtue rather than a vice (2:13, 18; 3:1, 5; 5:5).[10] In the first usage, Peter employs the imperative

9 See Cochran, "Virtuous Assent and Christian Faith," 131. She articulates a similar moral understanding among the Stoics and explains, "The Stoic concept of assent provides a means of articulating a vision of the moral life as partaking in the activity of God's loving providence, a vision that stands in keeping with Christian theology."

10 A sixth usage of this verb in 1 Pet 3:22 asserts that Jesus's assent to heaven is accompanied by bringing angels, authorities, and powers into proper relationship (ὑποταγέντων) with him. This assertion describes the change of Jesus's status from being made a little lower than the angels and from his having to fit in appropriately with authorities and powers while on earth, to all of these having to fit in appropriately with him after he ascends to the right hand of God. This sixth usage does not therefore specifically address the virtue or vice of human conduct and need not be considered in a discussion of ὑποτάσσεσθαι as an ethical term. See also Jisk Steetskamp,

ὑποτάγητε to urge his readers to fit in or to be in a proper relationship with every human institution in the whole of society (1 Pet 2:13).[11] Rather than the vice of servile submission to these institutions, however, Peter stipulates the virtue of fitting in by adding "on account of the Lord" (2:13) and by conditioning his exhortation with a circumstantial participle (ἔχοντες, 2:12). Peter's addition and this participle emphasize that the good conduct his readers are to maintain is that deemed to be good by the Lord rather than by some humans who do not accurately view the reality of the Lord's sovereignty. One day, these errant humans will see clearly and glorify God for the good deeds performed by Peter's readers (2:12).

"Durchkreuzte Unterordnungen: Beobachtungen im 1. Petrusbrief," in *Strategien der Positionierung im 1. Petrusbrief*, ed. Stefan Alkier, Kleine Schriften des Fachbereichs Evangelische Theologie der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main 4 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2014), 23–44, here 23. He points out that forms of the verb ὑποτάσσεσθαι ("to fit in" or "to subordinate") occur six times in Peter's letter and indicate the importance of the action named by this verb for Peter's instructions. Steetskamp observes that the concentration of Peter's use of this verb (1 Pet 1:13–16; 2:9) is closely connected to the exodus narrative and the corresponding freedom that God gives each community member in Christ (1 Pet 1:18–19; 2:16) (14). Thus, he sees the subordination crisscrossed with freedom and explains, "The admonition to church members to submit as subjects of the empire, as slaves, as wives, and even as neophytes to the church is adamantly urged and just as adamantly thwarted.... The eschatological reality of the risen and glorified Christ that penetrates the present challenges the power of the present order. Of him, the Christ, 'the Angels and the authorities and the powers are subject to him.' ... The Christian life is actually a tightrope walk between solidarity with the downtrodden within social [and political] structures and conventions and the eschatological abolition of all humiliation that is already presently valid. This tightrope walk is the path of Christian alienation in the world" (42–43, my translation).

11 What Peter recommends is neither withdrawal from society as practiced by the Epicureans nor repudiation of society as advocated by the Cynics, but rather a rapprochement with the broader society as he urges his recipients to fit in on account of the Lord. See Troy W. Martin, "Live Unnoticed: An Epicurean Maxim and the Social Dimension of Col 3:3–4," in *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins and Margaret M. Mitchell (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 227–44; Martin, *By Philosophy and Empty Deceit: Colossians as Response to a Cynic Critique*, JSNTSup 118 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 61–63, 78–82; Martin, "The Chronos Myth in Cynic Philosophy," *GRBS* 38 (1997): 85–108. For a concise summary of the Balch-Elliott debate related to this issue, see David G. Horrell, *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity*, LNTS 294 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 212–13. Horrell notes that 1 Peter advocates conforming "as far as possible" to societal standards of goodness while at the same time maintaining a stance of distance and resistance to empire, and he deems this strategy "polite resistance" (*Becoming Christian*, 236–38). Miroslav Volf calls the "differentiated acceptance and rejection of the surrounding culture" a "soft difference." See Miroslav Volf, "Soft Difference: Reflections on the Relation between Church and Culture in 1 Peter," *Ex Auditu* 10 (1994): 15–30, here 22, 24. What Horrell and Volf accurately perceive is that "fitting in" is neither abject capitulation to societal institutions nor wholesale rejection of them, but rather an integration of both assimilation and distinctiveness and of both conformity and resistance.

Peter further stipulates the virtue of fitting in by including the emperor and his governors as human rather than divine institutions (2:13–14). Peter qualifies the attribution of supremacy to the emperor and his sending governors by the adverb ὡς ("as though"). If Peter had omitted this adverb, he would be affirming the absolute supremacy of an emperor and his authority in commissioning governors. However, Peter uses this adverb with these participles to denote condition or supposition in contrast to fact.[12] Peter thus exhorts his exiles to fit in with a king or emperor *as though* he is supreme or *under the pretense of* his being supreme while they of course know that their Lord is really supreme and superior to an emperor in every way and especially in power.[13] While the emperor has supreme power over the empire, his supremacy is still limited by the power of God. The addition of this adverb also indicates that the governors are not really sent by the emperor but rather by the Lord, to whom they ultimately owe their allegiance.[14] These human authorities are susceptible to ignorance (ἀγνωσία) and absent-mindedness (ἀφρόνων) of the Lord's ultimate authority, and Peter is very clear that his readers must not submit but rather restrain (φιμοῦν) such errant human authorities by doing good as God's will directs (2:15). According to the Petrine traditions in Acts, Peter models his exhortation by announcing that he intends to follow God rather than the illegitimate command of the Jerusalem authorities, and Peter says to them, "You judge if it is just before God to obey you rather than God" (Acts 4:19).[15] According to Peter's stipulations in his letter, the virtue of fitting in with human institutions—including emperor and governors—requires cooperation when they assume their proper place in God's reality but resistance when they do not.[16]

12 Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), §2086a. See the discussion of ὡς ("as though") and its use in 2 Cor 6:8–10 in Troy W. Martin, "Emotional Physiology and Consolatory Etiquette: Reading the Present Indicative with Future Meaning in the Eschatological Statement in 1 Pet 1:6," *JBL* 135 (2016): 649–60, here 655–56.

13 Louis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 70–73; cf. Reinhard Feldmeier, *The First Letter of Peter: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 159.

14 F. J. A. Hort, *The First Epistle of St Peter I.1—II.17: The Greek Text with Introductory Lecture, Commentary, and Additional Notes* (London: Macmillan, 1898), 141; J. H. A. Hart, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, The Expositor's Greek Testament 5 (1897; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 60.

15 Acts contains several other examples of absent-minded rulers and authorities that behave in an improper way as a result of their ignorance (Acts 16:19–24, 35–39; 22:22–29). In 1 Cor 2:8, Paul describes the rulers involved in Jesus's crucifixion by saying, "None of the rulers of this age understood this [God's wisdom], for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

16 See Catherine Clark Kroeger, "Towards a Pastoral Understanding of 1 Peter 3.1–6 and Related Texts," in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, FCNTECW (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 82–88, here 83. She explains,

Despite Peter's careful stipulations, however, many Petrine interpreters prefer to translate the imperative ὑποτάγητε in 1 Pet 2:13 as "submit." But submission implies a servility and subservience precluded by Peter's conditioning this verb by the prepositional phrase "on account of the Lord" (2:13), by the participial phrase about the good walk in 2:12, and by the relegation of the emperor and governors to human institutions (2:14). The good walk these readers maintain as a condition for "fitting in" with every human institution is not according to human estimation but rather the Lord's, and when human and divine obligations conflict, the Lord's estimation of what the good walk entails takes precedence.[17] Translating ὑποτάγητε as "submit" skews Peter's exhortation toward the vice of capitulating to human standards and requirements in a subservience quite at odds with the virtue of fitting in that Peter is recommending by his first use of ὑποτάσσεσθαι.[18] The imperative ὑποτάγητε is thus better translated as "fit in" with the meaning of putting one's self in a proper place with every human institution.[19]

Peter uses ὑποτάσσεσθαι a second time when he addresses the Christian domestics (2:18).[20] Rather than an imperative, however, he uses the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι, which explains the means for achieving his

"The word for submission is ὑποτάσσω" and "it has a wide semantic range.... The literal meaning 'to place oneself under', or in military parlance, 'to draw up behind', developed other meanings: to serve as an ally, to attach to, to identify or associate with, to adhere to or to relate in such a way as to make meaning. The term had also the sense of loyalty and of orderly and accountable behavior." She reasons, "In view of Peter's resolute insistence that obedience must be yielded to God rather than man ... one can hardly construe the term, in a Petrine text, to require a believer's absolute obedience. In no way can duty to state be placed higher than the dictates of God or individual conscience." She concludes, "Rather there is a call to Christians for compliance with the structures necessary for the peaceful functioning of society and a discharge of all rightful obligations of citizenship." See also Kroeger, "Let's Look Again at the Biblical Concept of Submission," in *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1995), 135–40.

17 Joel B. Green, *1 Peter*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 73.

18 Andrea V. Oelger and Troy W. Martin, *I Promise to Hate, Despise, and Abuse You until Death Do Us Part: Marriage in a Narcissistic Age* (Bourbonnais, IL: Bookend, 2010), 67–71; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 124; Donald Senior, *1 & 2 Peter*, New Testament Message: A Biblical-Theological Commentary 20 (Dublin: Veritas, 1980), 43; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 176–77; Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan, *First and Second Peter*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 64.

19 Oelger and Martin, *I Promise*, 68; cf. Green, *1 Peter*, 73, 75; Senior, *1 & 2 Peter*, 43, 49, 54, 58.

20 Instead of talking about slaves and wives in the abstract as do pagan station codes, Peter and other Christian authors (Eph 6:5–9; Col 3:22–25; cf. Titus 2:9–10) address them directly to affirm their intelligence and independent moral agency. See Jobes, *1 Peter*, 184–85, 203–4; and Elliott, *1 Peter*, 513, 554.

exhortation to honor all (2:17).[21] By fitting in with their masters, these domestics participate in honoring all. Peter stipulates in several different ways that this participle designates the virtue of fitting in with these masters and not the vice of submitting to them. He modifies this participle by adding the prepositional phrase ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ ("in all fear"). Simply adding ἐν φόβῳ ("in fear") would designate the vice of cowering before the brute force of their masters.[22] However, Peter does not merely write ἐν φόβῳ ("in fear") but ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ ("in all fear"), and "all fear" must include the fear of God mentioned in 1 Pet 2:17 (cf. 1:17).[23] Whatever power these masters hold over these domestics pales in comparison to the power of God, and these Christian domestics do not ultimately belong to these masters but rather to God as slaves of God, as do all Christians (1 Pet 2:16).[24] Considering that they really belong to God and must answer to God, Peter advises these domestics to honor all by fitting in with their human masters, but ὑποτασσόμενοι ("fitting in") does not mean servile acquiescence to every whim or dictate of these masters.[25] These house servants are to

21 See John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. John Owen (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1855), 101 n. 1. Peter's exhortation for his recipients to honor all is a fitting superscription for this station code since this exhortation Christianizes the broader conception of honor held in Greco-Roman society. By using circumstantial participles of means, Peter presents his address to the domestics, wives, and husbands as subordinate to the single command πάντας τιμήσατε ("honor all"). Peter thus creates a single, unified honor code that is structured by these subordinating participles and the repetition of the adverb ὁμοίως ("likewise") in 1 Pet 3:1, 7. Translating these participles as imperatives skews this structure.

22 Carter, "Going All the Way," 14–33.

23 Charles A. Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 142; P. N. Trempelas, Υπομνημα εις την προς Εβραιους και τας Επτα Καθολικας (Athens: Αδελφοτης Θεολογων Η Ζωη, 1941), 269; Francis W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 121.

24 Peter redefines slavery for these domestics, but he differs from other moralists by not defining it in Stoic terms of the wise as free and the fool as slave but rather in terms of slavery to God (1 Pet 2:16; cf. Dio Chrysostom, *2 Serv. Lib.* 18 = *Or.* 15.18). Peter's redefinition of slavery thus resembles the Cynic view in that he treats these domestics as free persons who do not really belong to their legal owners. In contrast to the Cynics, however, Peter affirms these domestics as free not because slavery is a cultural sham but because they have become slaves of God. Instead of treating slavery as an unreality as Cynics do, Peter takes very seriously the position of these domestics who must answer to δεσπόται ("masters"), and Peter does not advise these domestics to consider their servile situation as a matter of indifference and as affecting only their bodies and not their souls, as the Stoics claim. Instead, he advises them as complete persons under the power of human masters to honor all "by fitting in with these masters in all fear."

25 M. Eugene Boring, *1 Peter*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 118; Green, *1 Peter*, 79; contra Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 150; and Carolyn Osiek, "Female Slaves, *Porneia*, and the Limits of Obedience," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 255–74, here 272.

be conscious of God (2:19) and fit in on account of the Lord (2:13).[26] If the commands and instructions of the masters oppose the desires of God, these domestics must deliberate and conclude that "fitting in" means obedience to God rather than submission to these human masters. For these domestics, fitting in honors not only God but also their masters, even the hard and difficult ones.[27]

Peter further stipulates that the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι does not designate the vice of submission by discussing the unjust suffering that will almost certainly come to these domestics when they choose to fit in with God's reality (2:19–20). If they abjectly submit to their errant human masters, these domestics would not suffer at their hands, and Peter's discussion of suffering would be pointless. Peter emphasizes that fitting in and not submitting accrue favor with God, who will reward them, even as their errant human masters punish them.[28] By appealing to the example of Christ, Peter provides an even more pointed stipulation that this participle refers to virtue and not vice since Jesus fit in with human authorities and cooperated with them as far as righteousness would allow but refused to submit to their errant demands and chose rather to suffer and die at their hands (2:21–23). Peter points out to these domestics that Jesus's decision to fit in with God's reality rather than to submit to errant humans reined in even these domestics from their own errant ways and brought them into a right relationship with God (2:24–25), as is common in discussions of this virtue and vice by other authors. Peter addresses these domestics as complete and whole human beings who are capable of deliberation and of making prudent, rational choices about their conduct, and he urges them to honor all by avoiding the vice of submission and by pursuing the virtue designated by the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι.

Peter uses ὑποτάσσεσθαι a third time in his address to Christian wives and again as a participle (ὑποτασσόμεναι, 3:1) stating the means for these

26 Peter's specific principle of fitting in on account of the Lord in 2:13 informs all the uses of ὑποτάσσεσθαι in his honor code.

27 Peter's characterization of masters as either decent or hard is typical of ancient slave literature that presents masters in this polarized fashion without any middle ground. See Seneca, *Epist.* 47.17; and Plutarch, *Cat. Maj.* 5.2. This polarized distinction serves the paraenetic interests of these authors but is most likely not an accurate taxonomy of the natural continuum from hard to decent, with masters falling all along the continuum in their treatment of slaves.

28 Similarly, Epictetus advises that slaves should not obey masters who order them to act contrary to the science of living (*Diatr.* 4.1.118). Epictetus acknowledges that such disobedience will be punished but then points out that the slave who behaves nobly suffers no harm even if flogged, imprisoned, or beheaded, while the master who does these things is harmed and becomes like a wolf, snake, or wasp instead of a human being (*Diatr.* 4.1.119, 127). For Epictetus, a slave may refuse a master to live the undisturbed life prescribed by Stoic philosophy, but for Peter, these domestics may refuse human masters to live the life prescribed by God.

wives to participate in honoring all (2:13).[29] Just as with the domestics, Peter's use of the participle ὑποτασσόμεναι ("by fitting in") does not refer to the vice of submitting, although almost all translators render it that way.[30] According to the marriage customs under which they lived, these wives physically left their ancestral households and moved into the household of their respective husbands even though they often remained under the *potestas* of their fathers.[31] These wives were expected, indeed obligated, to participate in their unbelieving husband's domestic pagan cult, and translating or interpreting the participle ὑποτασσόμεναι as subordination leaves these wives without adequate means to assert their new found faith and their exclusive devotion to Christ as Lord.[32] If these wives submit to the demands of their unbelieving husbands to participate in pagan household rites, they would not honor the Lord, and thus Peter's participle ὑποτασσόμεναι would not express a means for honoring all. Despite an overwhelming interpretive tradition, this participle, therefore, does not designate the vice of submitting.

Instead, ὑποτασσόμεναι designates the virtue of fitting in with their husbands on account of the Lord (2:13) and of abstaining from pagan rites and anything else that would displease the Lord. Even though their un-

29 See Balch and Osiek, *Families*, 61. They explain, "In earlier Roman practice most marriages had been accompanied by a transfer of *manus*, personal legal authority, of the bride from father to husband. By the imperial period most marriages were *sine manu*, without this provision, so that even a married woman remained under her father's jurisdiction and legally therefore in his familia until his death, when she acquired legal rights sui juris," which means her own independent legal standing. The marriages of these wives whom Peter addresses were likely *sine manu* rather than *manus* because most women were married *sine manu* in the late Republic and the Principate during the time Peter is writing. Peter's advice, however, applies to either type of marriage. See also Eva M. Lassen, "The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 103–26, here 106; and Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family*, Ancient Society and History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 73–75.

30 For examples, see RSV, NIV; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 155; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 553–54; and Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 218–19.

31 Richard Saller, "The Roman Family as Productive Unit," in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman World*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 116–28, here 119; Kate Cooper, "The Household as a Venue for Religious Conversion," in Rawson, *Companion to Families*, 183–97, here 186.

32 For the expression of this obligation by ancient authors, see Xenophon, *Oec.* 7.8; Cicero, *Leg.* 2.19, 22, 48–49; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.25.1; and Plutarch, *Conj. praec.* 19 = *Mor.* 140d. For modern authors, see John M. G. Barclay, "The Family as Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 66–80, here 67–68, 73; and Fanny Dolansky, "Celebrating the Saturnalia: Religious Ritual and Roman Domestic Life," in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman World*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 488–503, here 488.

believing husbands and others might deem such conduct as dishonoring, these wives are behaving honorably by integrating themselves appropriately into the Lord's reality.[33] By assuming their proper place in this reality, these wives really do honor all and fit in with the human institution of marriage even though their unpersuaded husbands and others may not think so. By placing themselves in the Lord's reality, these wives have the moral authority to support their believing husbands in doing good and to persuade their unbelieving husbands to take their proper place in this reality as well.

Peter's description of the spirit or attitude by which these wives may gain their unbelieving husbands further demonstrates that the participle ὑποτασσόμεναι does not refer to the vice of submission but rather to the virtue of fitting in with a higher moral obligation. His description resembles that of other moralists who advise someone how to negotiate competing moral obligations. For example, Musonius Rufus describes how a son who feels a moral obligation to philosophy shall bring around (ὑπάξεται) his father who forbids him from pursuing or practicing philosophy (*Frag.* 16).[34] Musonius first recommends using reason alone (λόγῳ χρώμενος μόνῳ) to persuade a father who is not too obstinate (σκληρός). For a father who is obstinate, however, and who is not persuaded by reasoned speech (τῷ λόγῳ), Musonius proposes that the deeds (τὰ ἔργα) of his son shall bring (ὑπάξεται) the father around to the desired point of view. Musonius asks what father would fault a son for being well-behaved (κοσμιώτατος) and most gentle (πρᾳότατος) and never contentious (φίλερις), nor selfish (φίλαυτος), nor rash (προπετής), nor rebelliously disposed (ταραχώδης), nor prone to anger (ὀργίλος), but always treating his father with the utmost respect (προθυμότατος) and giving up all pleasures and accepting all kinds of hardships willingly for his father's sake. When an obstinate father sees that philosophy teaches his son all these virtues, Musonius reasons, this father will be brought around, not by reasoned speech but by the deeds of his son, to accept his son's pursuit of philosophy. Musonius thus does not advise this young man to submit to his errant father's demand to abandon philosophy but rather to be resolute in his devotion to philosophy, but at the same time not to be defiant, combative, or obstinate toward his father. A proper attitude, Musonius advises, is necessary when negotiating competing moral obligations to bring around the errant person to whom an inferior moral obligation is owed.

33 Karl O. Sandnes, "Equality within Patriarchal Structures: Some New Testament Perspectives on the Christian Fellowship as a Brother or Sisterhood and a Family," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 150–65, here 153–56.

34 See Cora E. Lutz, "Musonius Rufus, 'The Roman Socrates,'" *Yale Classical Studies* 10 (1947): 1–147, here 101–7.

Peter explains to these Christian wives how to negotiate their own conflicting moral obligations in relation to husbands and especially unbelieving ones, and he employs a strategy resembling that of Musonius and even uses similar terms. Peter implies that they should first use reasoned speech (τῷ λόγῳ), but if that fails, they should then rely on their conduct (ἀναστροφῆς) as a means of persuasion (3:1). He describes this conduct as morally blameless (ἁγνὴν) and in fear (ἐν φόβῳ, 3:2). He does not need to use "in all fear" as with the domestics to refer to the fear of the Lord because he has already used the verbal form of ἀναστροφή to instruct these wives and indeed the entire Christian community to conduct their lives in the fear of the Lord (1:17).[35] Since submitting to an inferior moral obligation because of fear is blameworthy, as demonstrated by Ismene in Sophocles's *Antigone*, these wives can only be morally blameless if they conduct themselves according to the superior moral obligation of their Lord rather than submitting to their husbands when these two moral obligations are in conflict. Peter's explanation has striking similarities to that of Musonius, but neither of these moralists recommend submission when negotiating conflicting moral obligations.

Like Musonius, Peter also describes the proper deferential attitude for such conduct, and he emphasizes that these wives should avoid competition with their husbands.[36] Instead of the elaborate hairstyles, costly jewelry, and expensive clothes by which women typically compete, these wives should rather adorn themselves with a gentle and tranquil spirit (τοῦ πραέως καὶ ἡσυχίου πνεύματος), which is the opposite of a competitive attitude (3:3–4).[37] Peter states that the goal of this noncompetitive atti-

35 In his letter, Peter uses the term ἀναστροφή ("walk") as a type of theological "shorthand" in reference to the entire lifestyle and conduct that God desires and requires.

36 Plato invents or develops a distinction of the inner and outer person as part of his broader ethical enterprise to integrate the cooperative into the competitive virtues that dominated Greek morality in the Homeric Age down to Plato's day (*Resp.* 2 368e–369b). See Arthur W. H. Atkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), 259. Like Plato, Peter contrasts the cooperative virtues of the inner person with the competitive virtues of the outer person.

37 The three genitive phrases limit the meaning of the term κόσμος ("adornment") to the three traditional areas of coiffure, accessories, and clothes, and these three represent the primary ways not only Greco-Roman women but also women of almost all cultures compete to make themselves more attractive. See Richard Hawley, "The Dynamics of Beauty in Classical Greece," in *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity*, ed. Dominic Montserrat (New York: Routledge, 1998), 37–54, here 48–49. Several examples of the καλλιστεῖον ("beauty contest") occur in ancient literature (Hawley, "Dynamics of Beauty," 37–39), and the wives Peter addresses almost certainly know of such contests and the contestants who pursue outward beauty and compete by embraiding their hair, putting on golden accessories, and donning exquisite garments. Even though Peter critiques these outward means of beauty, he neither sees them as immoral or sinister nor as immodest or improper as does the author of 1 Tim 2:9. Rather, Peter follows more closely the

tude is to gain unpersuaded husbands, and Peter appropriately uses the accounting term κερδηθήσονται ("shall be gained," 3:1).[38] Unfortunately, almost every English translation renders this term with the words "win" or "won," which connote notions of contest or competition between wives and husbands in which the wife would be the victor and the husband the vanquished by becoming a Christian.[39] Peter, however, carefully avoids such competitive language and instead uses this accounting term in reference to a business transaction in which both parties realize gain and one is not bested by the other. Both Peter and Musonius thus emphasize that resisting an errant human to whom a moral obligation is owed requires a deferential, respectful, and noncompetitive attitude but not a submissive one.

Peter uses ὑποτάσσεσθαι a fourth time in his example illustrating the noncompetitive attitude necessary for these Christian wives to fit in with their husbands (3:5). In this example, Peter employs the present tense circumstantial participle ὑποτασσόμεναι to state the purpose of a gentle and tranquil spirit.[40] Although many commentators understand this partici-

Hellenistic moralists who advise against these practices because they are transient externals and therefore of less worth than practices that nourish and enhance the soul or essence of a person. The contrasting terms "gentle" (πραέως) and "tranquil" (ἡσυχίου) are not vices characteristic of a submissive spirit but rather the virtues of a resolute and stalwart holy life as exemplified by the righteous and holy Abraham, described as gentle (πραότητι) and tranquil (ἡσυχίᾳ) in T.Ab. 1:1 rec A. These two adjectives express just those virtues most conducive for conciliating these husbands. See Musonius Rufus, *Dissertationum* 10.24; Plutarch, *Cohib. ira* 10 = *Mor.* 458c; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.3.17; and Plato, *Gorgias* 489d. See also David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in I Peter*, SBLMS 26 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981), 99–100, 102–3. Not surprisingly, then, gentleness is the quality of a successful teacher in persuading students and in instructing opponents. Jesus claims gentleness (Matt 11:29) as does Paul (2 Cor 10:1), and it is required of Christian instructors (Gal 6:1; 2 Tim 2:25).

38 Peter's use of the verb κερδαίνειν ("to gain") in reference to gaining someone is Christian jargon and quite un-Greek. See Heinrich Schlier, "κέρδος," *TDNT* 3.672–73, here 673; and David Daube, "κέρδος as a Missionary Term," *HTR* 40 (1947): 109–20, here 109. Commenting on 1 Cor 9:19 but referencing 1 Pet 3:1, Johannes Weiss calls the Christian use of this term an "echter term. tech. der Missionarssprache" and interchangeable with σώζειν ("to save"). See Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, KEK, 9th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 243; cf. Daube, "Missionary Term," 111. The broader Christian tradition favors σώζειν ("to save;" e.g., Jas 5:20) or εὑρίσκειν ("to find;" e.g., Luke 15:6, 9, 24, 32) to κερδαίνειν ("to gain"). Indeed, the entire ministry of the Son of Man can be summarized as a combination of finding and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). The only other use of κερδαίνειν in the NT in the sense of gaining someone is Matt 18:15, but this usage is not exactly the same as in 1 Cor 9:19 and 1 Pet 3:1 since Jesus's statement envisions gaining a fellow Christian.

39 For examples, see KJV, NAB, NASB, NET, NIV, RSV; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 558; Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 219–20; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 204; and Michaels, *1 Peter*, 157.

40 Many translations (ASV, KJV, NIV, RSV) and some commentators render the adjective ἡσυχίου ("tranquil") in 1 Pet 3:4 with the English word "quiet," and commentators often relate it to the instruction for women to keep silence in 1 Tim 2:11–12 and 1 Cor 14:34–36. See Beare, *First Epistle of Peter*, 130; Michaels, *1 Peter*, 162; Paul J. Achtemeier,

ple as instrumental and as referring to the subordination of these wives to their husbands, the vice of submission does not provide a means for a gentle and tranquil spirit to adorn these wives of old.[41] In addition, a rhetorical example cannot contradict the point it illustrates, and this example, therefore, must embellish the virtue of fitting in and not the vice of submission. Furthermore, the participle must express purpose for this example to clarify what Peter has said by providing historical precedents of holy wives who formerly used to adorn themselves with a gentle and tranquil spirit in order to fit in with their husbands.[42]

Peter's example is brief because he presumes the wives he addresses are familiar with the holy wives of old and their stories, but he adds a simile of Sarah's attitude toward Abraham to specify in an even more focused way the gentle and tranquil spirit with which these wives adorned themselves to fit in with their husbands. Peter characterizes Sarah's relationship with Abraham by using the verb ὑπήκουσεν, and almost all commentators and translations render this verb as "obeyed" and use this rendering to support the notion of submission.[43] Rendering ὑπήκουσεν as "obeyed," however, does not fit the context since Sarah's addressing Abraham as κύριον ("lord") is hardly evidence of her obedience. After all, the Lucan Jesus asks why some call him "Lord, Lord" but do not do what he says (Luke 6:46), and the Matthean Jesus warns that not everyone who addresses him as "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven because of evil deeds and a refusal to do God's will (Matt 7:21–23). Simply addressing someone as "lord" is no guarantee of obedience.

Additionally, New Testament writers do not characterize the relationship of a wife to her husband as one of obedience. The household codes in Colossians and Ephesians use the term ὑπακούειν ("to obey") of children and slaves (Col 3:20, 22; Eph 6:1, 5) but significantly not of wives (Col 3:18; Eph 5:22–24). Even Selwyn, who is so keen to locate Petrine material in the early Christian catechetical tradition, can find no parallel anywhere in the Christian traditions of Peter's use of ὑπήκουσεν in the sense of wifely

1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 214 n. 121; and Edward G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Essays*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 184. Silence, however, is not the main idea of the ἥσυχος word group, but rather the central notion is calmness and tranquility. Even in contexts where this adjective refers to silence, the silence is almost always for the purpose of attaining or retaining a state of ἡσυχία ("calmness" or "tranquility").

41 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 215; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude*, HNTC (1969; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 130–31; Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 120; cf. Mark Dubis, *1 Peter: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, BHGNT (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 90.

42 Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §2065.

43 For example, see Elliott, *1 Peter*, 571.

obedience.[44] Furthermore, even non-Christian authors are reticent to use the verb ὑπακούειν in the sense of "to obey" as a description of the relationship of a wife to her husband since the marital relationship is not one of dependence, as with children and slaves who must obey or be punished, but rather a partnership in a common enterprise as both spouses participate in the raising of their children and the management of their domestic possessions.[45] Since neither the Christian nor the secular traditions characterize the relationship of the wife to her husband as one of obedience, Peter's use of ὑπήκουσεν in 1 Pet 3:6 probably does not either.[46]

Instead of meaning obedience, this verb is contextualized and specified by the following instrumental participial phrase κύριον αὐτὸν καλοῦσα ("by calling him 'lord'"). This phrase places the verb ὑπήκουσεν in the context of verbal exchanges between Sarah and Abraham. In such contexts, the verb ὑπακούειν with the dative does not mean "to obey" but rather "to

44 Selwyn, *First Epistle of St. Peter*, 433.

45 Two possible exceptions are Philemon Comicus, frag. 132 (Koch) = frag. FIF 44 (Meineke), and Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.201. Philemon's fragment reads, "It is the obligation of a good wife, Nicostratus, not to have the upper hand [κρείττονα] over her husband but to be responsive [ὑπήκοον], but a wife who vanquishes her husband is a very bad thing." The adjective ὑπήκοον could refer to obedience but more likely provides a contrast to domination and is best rendered as "responsive" given the moral consensus that a wife ought not to obey a husband's command to commit an evil or unlawful act. The passage in Josephus reads, "A wife, the Jewish Law says, is inferior to her husband in all things. Therefore, let her listen [ὑπακουέτω] [to her husband], not for the purpose of harm [μὴ πρὸς ὕβριν] but in order that she may be governed [ἄρχηται], for God gave the rule [κράτος] to the husband." This passage likely references the creation of woman after the man in Genesis 2 as well as God's statement in Gen 3:16 that the husband will govern or rule the wife. The imperative ὑπακουέτω may refer to obedience, but the addition of the prepositional phrase "not for the purpose of harm" indicates that the wife should not comply when it is to her detriment. Since the wife is the moral agent deciding what is harmful and what is not, this imperative is more accurately rendered as "listen to" rather than "obey" since she should not obey when to do so would harm her. Aelius Aristides says that the one who listens learns, and then he records this saying, "Let the husband say many things, and the wife should listen [ἀκούσῃ] to them" (Πρὸς Πλάτωνα περὶ ῥητορικῆς 32.28). This saying expresses the general notion that a wife should listen to her husband, but the numerous examples in ancient literature when a wife does not follow the wishes of a husband demonstrate that listening does not necessarily result in obedience. Neither the fragment of Philemon Comicus nor the passage from Josephus, therefore, establishes that a wife should obey her husband as children obey their parents or as slaves obey their masters.

46 See Betsy J. Bauman-Martin, "Feminist Theologies of Suffering and Current Interpretations of 1 Peter 2.18–3.9," in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, FCNTECW (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 63–81, here 69. She explains, "The most salient critique of the consensus feminist exegesis of 1 Peter is that the advice to the women and slaves is not a straightforward and all-inclusive command to be obedient or submissive, as most have claimed.... A close reading will show that the text presumes the rebellious disobedience of the slaves and wives who were participating in Christian activities."

answer" or "to respond" to someone.[47] When used in a simile, the aorist tense of this verb does not refer to a specific instance but rather to repeated or customary action, and this verb, therefore, should be rendered as "used to respond."[48] Peter does not affirm Sarah's obedience to Abraham but rather describes the typical way she responded and interacted with him by calling him "lord."[49] Peter's simile thus presents Sarah's responding to Abraham with respect rather than competition to clarify more specifically how these wives of old adorned themselves with a gentle and tranquil spirit to fit in with their husbands. Sarah and these other holy wives were married to husbands who were trying to realize a divine promise, and these wives—rather than being in competition with their husbands—also hoped in God to fit in with that divine promise and purpose.

Peter concludes his simile of Sarah by pointing out that the wives he addresses became Sarah's daughters to do good and not to fear even a single terror.[50] Some interpreters see a problem with the implication that Sarah is fearless because she is specifically described as being afraid in Gen 18:15. Peter's characterization of Sarah as a model of not fearing, however, relies on an image of Sarah current in his own day. Over time, perceptions of notable persons from the past tend to become idealized, with their virtues

47 For the use of this verb with the dative in dialogues to mean "respond," see LSJ, "ἀκούω," I.2.b.

48 See Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §§1933, 1935, 2481. The aorist denotes iterative action in a simile even when the particle ἄν is lacking.

49 See Troy W. Martin, "The TestAbr and the Background of 1Pet 3,6," *ZNW* 90 (1999): 139–46. The Testament of Abraham presents Sarah as adorned with a gentle and tranquil spirit although it does not use this precise terminology. She remains in her own house (T.Ab. A 5:11; B 4:1) and in her own bedroom (T.Ab. A 6:4). She goes out only to help Abraham or to care for him or to do her work. She helps Abraham to recognize the angel of the Lord (T.Ab. A 6:1–6; B 6:7–13) and comforts him in his concern about Isaac's nightmare (T.Ab. A 6:4–5). While Abraham makes a journey around the world to see the entire creation, Sarah is so distressed that according to one tradition, she dies (T.Ab. B [Manuscript C] 12:15), or according to another tradition, she praises and thanks the angel who brought Abraham back (T.Ab. A 15:4). Such a presentation certainly makes Sarah an ideal wife according to Hellenistic standards and provides a simile clarifying how the wives of old adorned themselves with an appropriate attitude to fit in with their own husbands.

50 The participles ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι and φοβούμεναι are understood in various ways by commentators. Given the emphasis on the call to good works in the rest of Peter's letter, understanding the participles in 1 Pet 3:6 as expressing purpose fits the semantics not only of this verse but also the rest of the letter as well. Additionally, the ancient understanding that the purpose of a child is to assume the character and replicate the work of a parent further supports interpreting these participles as expressing purpose (cf. Matt 5:42–45; John 8:19, 25–29, 39–47; Rom 4:11–12, 23–25; 9:6–9). See Martin, "TestAbr," 144. Other NT authors describe children of Sarah implicitly by stating that people become Abraham's children by faith whereas Peter's formulation explicitly states that these wives are daughters of Sarah in order to do good and not to fear (Rom 4:11–13; Gal 3:7, 16, 29; 4:31; Heb 2:16; 6:13–15; Jas 2:21). See Watson and Callan, *First and Second Peter*, 76.

emphasized and their faults minimized or explained away somehow, and Sarah is no different.[51] The theme of the righteous person's having no need to fear is so widespread and such a general conception (cf. Jub. 22:20–23; 1 En. 100:5) that Peter's characterization of Sarah as lacking fear is neither unusual nor without precedent. Peter's characterization of Sarah and the Christian wives he addresses as lacking fear is an appropriate conclusion to his discussion of how to negotiate competing moral obligations since these wives need not fear when fitting in with the Lord's higher moral obligation and claim on their lives.[52]

Peter uses ὑποτάσσεσθαι a fifth and final time in his address to neophytes (νεώτεροι) in the faith (1 Pet 5:5). He employs the imperative form ὑποτάγητε to exhort them to fit in with those who are older (πρεσβυτέροις) in the faith.[53] In contrast to previous uses, Peter does not qualify this usage with several additional words, phrases, and clauses to specify that ὑποτάγητε refers to a virtue rather than a vice. Nevertheless, his previous uses in reference to the virtue of fitting in also condition and inform this usage as a virtue rather than the vice of submission. He does add, however, that both the advanced and the neophytes in the faith should tie on humble-mindedness (ταπεινοφροσύνην) toward one another (1 Pet 5:5b), and he quotes Prov 3:34 LXX as a warrant for this humble attitude. Outside of Peter's faith tradition, ταπεινοφροσύνη is generally used disparagingly in reference to a vice (Plutarch, *Alex. fort.* 2.4 = *Mor.* 336e; *Tranq. an.* 17 = *Mor.* 475e; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.24.56), but among Jews and Christians, this term more often designates the virtue of a mind set on doing what is right in relation to God instead of the vice of subservience.[54] Peter's use of ταπεινοφροσύνη as a virtue, therefore, supports an understanding of his use of ὑποτάγητε as the virtue of fitting in rather than the vice of submission. Since Peter exhorts those more advanced in the faith to conduct themselves as God directs, the neophytes should not find themselves in a situation of competing moral obligations, and thus Peter's use of ὑποτάγητε does not require as much qualification as in his previous uses of this word group. If the neophytes should find themselves in such a situation, however, Peter's previous qualifications of fitting in with the superior moral obligation pertains to them as well.

51 Philo, *Abr.* 205–207; *Spec.*2.54–55. See also Martin, "TestAbr," 144–45; and Dorothy I. Sly, "1 Peter 3:6b in the Light of Philo and Josephus," *JBL* 110 (1991): 126–29.

52 Peter negates the participle φοβούμεναι ("in order [not] to fear") with μή ("not") and also negates its object πτόησιν ("terror") with the emphatic compound negative adjective μηδεμίαν ("not even a single"), and this accumulation of negatives totally excludes any and every fear. See Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, §2761.

53 Elliott, *1 Pet* 836–40.

54 Walter Grundmann, "ταπεινοφροσύνην," *TDNT* 8.1–26, here 5–6; 11–12.

Peter's five ethical uses of ὑποτάσσεσθαι in his address to the wives, domestic slaves, neophytes, and indeed the whole Christian community thus participate in a broad-ranging moral investigation of how to act properly in situations of multiple moral obligations. When these obligations are competing or conflicting, the virtue designated by ὑποτάσσεσθαι may require resistance or insubordination instead of submission to an inferior moral obligation in order to fit in with superior divine moral obligations. Instead of the vice of submission, Peter's five uses all designate the virtue of fitting in with God's will, plans, and purposes.

Conclusion

Ancient discussions of how to negotiate competing moral obligations provide the broader context for Peter's ethical uses of ὑποτάσσεσθαι in his address to the Christian community in general (2:13) and to the domestics (2:18), wives (3:1, 5), and neophytes (5:5) in particular. These discussions deem submitting to an inferior moral obligation out of sync with a superior duty to be a vice. In contrast, they consider it a virtue to resist an inferior moral claim to fit in with a superior moral obligation. Translating Peter's uses of ὑποτάσσεσθαι in his letter as "submit" or "submission" or even "be subordinate" confuses the vice of submission with the virtue of fitting in that Peter designates in several different ways. He specifies that fitting in with every human institution is on account of the Lord (2:13) and that doing good according to the Lord's superior moral obligation will restrain the ignorance and absent-mindedness of inferior moral claimants (2:15). Peter encourages the domestics to honor all by fitting in with their masters but only in all fear (2:18). As much as they fear their masters, they should fear God even more and do good. Peter emphasizes that resistance rather than submitting to the inferior moral claim of their masters will almost certainly result in punishment but will most definitely please God (2:19–20) and follow the example of Jesus (2:21–25). Likewise, Peter encourages the wives to honor all by fitting in with their husbands. When their marital obligation conflicts with their obligation to the Lord, however, fitting in means resisting rather than submitting to their husbands. Peter explains that when resistance is necessary, it should not be with a competitive or obstinate attitude but rather with a gentle and tranquil spirit if these wives are to gain unbelieving husbands. Peter's example of the holy wives of old and his simile of Sarah embellishes and clarifies this respectful and deferential spirit necessary for negotiating their dual moral obligations to their husbands and to their Lord. Peter exhorts the neophytes to fit in with those more advanced in the faith, and he appropriately exhorts all to set

their minds on acting as God desires. Considering Peter's designation of ὑποτάσσεσθαι as the virtue of fitting in rather than the vice of submission, translators and interpreters would do well to avoid rendering this verb as *submission* since the antonym of submission is resistance and submission leaves no room for resistance of any kind. Rendering ὑποτάσσεσθαι as "fit in" allows this term to designate the virtue of cooperating when moral obligations are consistent with divine ones but resisting when they are not. Rather than throwing these Christians under the bus, Peter empowers them to resist inferior moral claims by virtuously fitting in with higher and superior moral obligations to live their lives as Christians.

The Greek language has several ethical terms that can designate either a virtue or a vice, and ὑποτάσσεσθαι is among them. For example, ζηλοῦν refers either to the virtue of emulation and zeal or to the vice of envy and jealousy. Consistently rendering this term in English with the jealously word group would hinder or even prohibit readers from perceiving the use of this term as a virtue even in contexts where it clearly does so. Another example is ὑπομένειν, which signifies the virtue of endurance or the vice of obstinacy. Always translating this term as "to be obstinate" would confuse readers of the New Testament, where this term is only used of the virtue of endurance. Unfortunately for the term ὑποτάσσεσθαι, the Latin equivalent is *summitto* (*submitto*), and this term has entered the English language as "to submit" with no alternative translations. Since the submission word group allows for no resistance but only compliance, capitulation, and obedience, using this word group to translate ὑποτάσσεσθαι renders this term exclusively as a vice. Even in contexts where this term refers to a virtue, therefore, it designates a vice in the estimation of Jennifer Bird, Warren Carter, and almost everyone else. Peter's careful stipulations that he provides when he uses ὑποτάσσεσθαι as a virtue consequently demand the avoidance of submission language when rendering this term, and the translation "to fit in" is a more accurate rendering not only in 1 Peter but also in every other context where this term refers to a virtue and not to a vice.