

## Alan Padgett

---

# The Pauline Rationale for Submission: Biblical Feminism and the *hina* Clauses of Titus 2:1–10

---

---

*Mr Padgett has previously contributed to The Evangelical Quarterly on the problem of feminism in the New Testament (58:2, April, 1986, 121–32). A minister of the United Methodist Church, he is at present doing further study in the University of Oxford.*

For the scholarship of a previous generation, it was axiomatic that Paul believed in the inferiority of women and for this reason required that wives submit to their husbands. For example, Albert Schweitzer believed that for Paul, ‘the man stands closer to God than the woman’.<sup>1</sup> This was an indication for Schweitzer of an inferior religion.

An interpretation of Paul has appeared, in recent years which argues that he was an egalitarian, especially in the light of his cultural milieu.<sup>2</sup> This new understanding of Paul is part of what I call ‘biblical feminism’, that is, a hermeneutic which respects the authority and integrity of the text and the equality and dignity of women, or better, holds to the latter *because* of the former. The centerpiece of this new and, in my opinion, correct reading of Paul is Gal. 3:28. Here Paul clearly teaches that in Christ a legalistic understanding of the OT and its social implications has been transcended.<sup>3</sup> The division between Jew and Gentile, slave

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Holt, 1931), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Among many works, see the following books in English: K. C. Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women* (Oakland, CA: private, 1923); K. Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966); L. Scanzoni and N. Hardesty, *All We’re Meant to Be* (Waco, TX: Word, 1974); R. & J. Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul’s View of Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976); M. Barth, *Ephesians 4–6* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977); D. Williams, *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church* (Van Nuys, CA: BIM, 1977); P. Tribles, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); and M. J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1983). The work of some feminists does not give enough weight to the authority of the whole of Scripture to fit my definition of biblical feminism.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Witherington, ‘Rites and Rights for Women-Galatians 3:28’, *NTS* 27, 1980/81, 593–604; F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 189f.; H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 189–200.

and free, male and female, has been abolished in the Body of Christ ('in Christ'). Krister Stendahl correctly tells us, 'There can be no doubt that Paul did everything in his power to apply this principle in the actual life of his congregations.'<sup>4</sup> *Pace* those who see this verse as merely a spiritual and not a practical equality, Paul did apply this egalitarian understanding in the church. Not only did he apply it to Jew-Gentile relationships in Gal., he clearly applied this principle to male-female relationships in 1 Cor. 11:2-16. In this passage, a similar understanding of the equality between men and woman (1 Cor. 11:11f.) led him to assert the right of women to wear their hair however they wish in the church services (11:10).<sup>5</sup> An egalitarian view of marriage can also be found at 1 Cor. 7:1-5. These examples demonstrate that Paul believed Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free, to be equal in Christ even in the concrete situations of his day.

The question naturally arises, why did Paul then command submission? Our essay will focus on the question of submission to husbands. Although submission of slaves to masters was at one time a subject of some controversy in America, since the slaves were 'freed', scholars have begun to see that slavery is not taught in the NT.<sup>6</sup> The 'woman question', however, has yet to be settled. The equally important question of submission to the state is outside the scope of this brief essay.<sup>7</sup>

With respect to the Pauline submission regulations, the greatest difficulty for a biblical feminist hermeneutic arises from the Pastoral Epistles. The house-codes of Eph. and Col. describe a rather balanced give-and-take in the Christian home. Wives are called to submit, but not to obey unwillingly. Husbands are recognized as authorities, for the Roman culture of the day, but the kind of authority they are called to is one of love and service, after the model of Christ (Eph. 5:25, Mk. 9:35 par.). This submission takes place in the context of a mutual submission of all Christians, one to the other (Eph. 5:21, cf. Phil. 2:2-4). Against the authoritarianism of his day, Paul has developed an ethic

<sup>4</sup> *Role of Women*, 33.

<sup>5</sup> See my 'Paul on Women in the Church: The Contradictions of Coiffure in 1 Cor. 11:2-16,' *JSNT* 20, 1984, 69-86.

<sup>6</sup> G. Klein, 'Christusglaube und Weltverantwortung als Interpretation-probleme neutestamentlicher Theologie', *VF* 18, 1973, 47-54; E. Schweizer, 'Zum Sklavenproblem in Neuen Testament', *EvTh* 32, 1972, 502-506; S. Scott Bartchy, *MALLON CHRESAI: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21* (Missoula: Scholars Pr., 1973). The subject was hotly debated in ante-bellum America. See the review essay, 'Slavery and the Bible', *The New Englander* 15, 1857, 102-134.

<sup>7</sup> On this question, see P. Le Fort, 'Le responsabilité politique de l'Église d'après les épîtres pastorales', *ETHR* 49 (1974) 1-14.

where husbands are called to love and nurture their wives, as they would their own bodies (Eph. 5:28). He begins with the structure of the Roman household, but so fills it with love and service, each to the other, that he radically transforms it.<sup>8</sup>

This egalitarian understanding of submission cannot be transferred to the church-codes of the Pastorals. True, the word *hypotassesthai* still means a voluntary submission to a recognized authority.<sup>9</sup> But the context of this voluntary submission has radically changed. Gone is the mutuality of love and service that one finds in Eph. There is a tendency for biblical feminists, therefore, to dismiss the Pastorals as deutero- or sub-Pauline, contrary to the teachings of Jesus and the 'true' Paul, and thus not important. Whether written by Paul or not, they are still authoritative as Canon, and therefore cannot be simply written off as less important for today than earlier NT writings. They deserve better study.<sup>10</sup>

There has been no research devoted solely to Tit. 2:1–10 that I could find. However, it does fall into two broad areas that have been studied: the Pastorals as a whole, and the NT house-codes or *Haustafeln*.

Most of the research into the Pastorals has focused on the question of authorship. Since this question is not central to my thesis, I will only deal with it summarily, considering four major positions. The first position, defended by Spicq and Guthrie, is that Paul himself wrote the Pastorals. Appeal is made to the obvious similarities between the Pastorals and other writings by Paul; and that the style, language, context, etc. of letters can change with age and audience.<sup>11</sup> This position is hard to accept, though, given the quantity and the quality of the differences

<sup>8</sup> Else Kähler, *Die Frau in den paulinischen Briefen* (Zurich/Frankfurt: Gotthelf, 1960), 97–110; M. Barth, *Ephesians*, 608–611, 700–715, S. Scott Barchy, 'Jesus, Power and Gender Roles', *TSF Bulletin* 7/3, Jan/Feb 1984, 2ff., which contains 'theses' toward a fuller study.

<sup>9</sup> G. Dellling, *TDNT*, 8:41–45; E. Kähler, *Die Frau*; and her 'Zur Unterordnung der Frau im Neuen Testament', *ZEE* 3, 1959, 1–13; M. Barth, 609f, 708–715.

<sup>10</sup> Among many others, see D. J. Doughty, 'Women and Liberation in the Churches of Paul and the Pauline Tradition', *Drew Gateway*, 50/2, Wint. 1979, 1–21: '... in the Pastoral Epistles any Christian basis for the subordination of women is totally absent.' (p.16). Cf. Tom Oden, i.a., who argues for the authority and importance of the Pastorals in *Agenda for Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 130–147.

<sup>11</sup> D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles and the Mind of Paul* (London: Tyndale, 1955); his *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: Tyndale, 1957); his *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1970), 184–622; and C. Spicq, *Saint Paul: Les Épîtres Pastorales* (Paris: Gabalda, 1969\*) esp. 1:157–214.

between the Pastorals and the accepted Pauline letters.<sup>12</sup> The so-called 'fragmentary hypothesis' is equally difficult. Although it was interesting and convincing when first proposed by Harrison more than sixty years ago, it has received criticism since that time that makes it less so.<sup>13</sup> Why are the fragments distributed among three pseudo-letters? If they were separate, how did they survive, and why only these? Questions like these have led Hanson, for example, to abandon the fragmentary hypothesis he formerly adhered to.<sup>14</sup> Two more acceptable theories are the 'secretary theory' and the deutero-pauline theory, or pseudepigraphic theory.<sup>15</sup> I prefer the secretary theory to the deutero-pauline theory (specifically a Lucan redaction). The latter view explains only the dissimilarities from Acts. It does not explain the

<sup>12</sup> These are still best set forth in P. N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford: Oxford U. Pr., 1921).

<sup>13</sup> See the decisive criticisms of D. Guthrie (n. 11); and more recently, David Cook, 'The Pastoral Fragments Reconsidered', *JTS*, n.s. 35 (1984), 120-130. Versions of the fragmentary hypothesis are still maintained by two recent commentators: G. Holtz, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (Berlin: Evangelische Vlg., 1965) and P. Dornier, *Les Épîtres Pastorales* (Paris: Gabalda, 1969).

<sup>14</sup> A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 6f. Hanson adopts the deutero-pauline theory.

<sup>15</sup> The best defense of the deutero-pauline theory to date is Peter Trummer, *Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe* (Frankfurt/Las Vegas: Lang, 1978). See also N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1969<sup>4</sup>), 22-77. One of the best critiques of the deutero-pauline theory can be found in the introduction (also in the commentary) by Gordon Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984). See also Spicq and Guthrie (cited in n. 11). Versions of the secretary theory are found in O. Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933); J. Jeremias and H. Strathmann, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981<sup>12</sup>); S. de Lestapis, *L'enigme des Pastorales de Saint Paul* (Paris: Gabalda, 1976); C. F. D. Moule, 'The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles', *BJRL* 47, 1965, 430-452; Stephen G. Wilson, *Luke and the Pastoral Epistles* (London: SPCK, 1979); J. D. Quinn, *I, II Timothy, Titus* (Anchor Bible, Garden City: Doubleday, forthcoming) and his 'The Last Volume of Luke', *Perspectives on Luke-Acts* ed. C. H. Talbert (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), 62-75). I accept a dating for the Pastorals from F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City: Anchor, 1972), 350-367; his *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 441-455; and W. Metzger, *Die letzte Reise des Apostels Paulus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Vlg., 1976), who defend a second Roman imprisonment. For criticisms of Lucan redaction see N. Brox, 'Lukas als Verfasser der Pastoralbriefe', *JAC* 13 (1970), 62-77. For a different chronology, see Bo Reicke, 'Chronologie der Pastoralbriefe', *TLZ*, 101 (1976), 81-94; Lestapis, 185-301; J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 67-77.

similarities to Acts;<sup>16</sup> the apparently authentic passages upon which the fragmentary theory was based, and the theological similarities to Rom. despite the lack of any direct citations from that book.<sup>17</sup> I believe a secretary (Luke?) would reproduce ideas in different language, but a later disciple would actually quote Paul (as the early Fathers do). There are problems with this theory, as with all theories of the authorship of the Pastorals.<sup>18</sup> But in my opinion it best covers all the data, with the least difficulties. I shall thus refer to the author as 'Paul'.

Fortunately, since nothing like a consensus is forthcoming with respect to the question of authorship, the central thesis of this essay does not depend on answering this question. All that is necessary is that Tit. 2 reflect an authentic rationale for women's submission. All theories of authorship admit that the Pastorals contain some Pauline material, even if written by his secretary or disciple. I assume, therefore, that Tit. 2:1–10 reflects Paul's reasons for commanding submission, even if expressed in un-Pauline language.

The second broad area of research that this pericope falls under is the house-codes. Though Seeberg was the first to focus scholarly attention on these codes, Dibelius was the more important early researcher into their Hellenistic background.<sup>19</sup> He concluded that words like 'it is fitting' (*aneken*) point to a Stoic morality which the house-codes merely Christianized.<sup>20</sup> His student Weidinger expanded this idea, to the point where it is a 'given' in some circles.<sup>21</sup> More recent research has found parallels in Greek philosophy, Hellenistic Judaism, and the Old Testament traditions, that are just as close—if not closer—to the NT pattern of addressing slaves, women, and children as ethically responsible,

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, *passim*; Lestapis, 129–148; A. Strobel, 'Schreiben des Lukas?', *NTS* 15 (1968/69), 191–200. N. Turner, in Moulton, *Grammar*, 4:104 notes 34 non-Pauline words, common to Luke, in the Pastorals.

<sup>17</sup> Lestapis, 315–388, for example.

<sup>18</sup> N. Brox, 'Lukas', Hanson, 8f.

<sup>19</sup> A. Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (Leipzig: A. Deichertschon, 1903); M. Dibelius, *An die Kolosser, Epheser, an Philemmon* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953<sup>3</sup>), 48–50.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> K. Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln* (Leipzig: J. C. Heinrich 1928). Weidinger rejected a purely Stoic origin, pp. 43–48.

along with the free adult male.<sup>22</sup> There is specifically in the NT house-codes a reciprocity of 'what is fitting' that is developed significantly 'in the Lord' or 'in Christ'.<sup>23</sup> There is a mutuality here, and as Lillie says, 'aspirations to a more egalitarian order.'<sup>24</sup>

While most scholars will often group the pastoral house-codes with the others, Schroeder has noticed an important distinction.<sup>25</sup> The reciprocity of the house-codes, and the balance of husband/wife, parent/child, and master/slave, is missing. In Tit. 2:1-10, for example, only the inferior members are specifically asked to act in a certain way towards others. Their social superiors have no task or duty assigned them to balance out the commands. Instead, the injunctions are grouped according to age and sex. Thus Tit. 2, along with the later house-codes as a whole (1 Pet. 2:13-3:7, Did. 4:9-11) is not in the same genre as the earlier, more egalitarian and mutual codes. We shall refer to them as 'church-codes', since their real concern is with the church, not with the home.

Of more import for this study is the question of the function and ethic of the house- and church-codes. A good case can be made that the house-codes are meant to describe a Christian home as it ought to be 'in the Lord', in the context of the Roman world of the day.<sup>26</sup> Allowances must be made for this context, in applying these codes to the twentieth century. This still leaves open the question of the function of the church-codes, in the NT ethic. There are four basic answers to this question in current debate: (1). A compromise with the world; (2). The suppression of an infantile liberation movement; (3). The working out of a 'creation

<sup>22</sup> David Schroeder, 'Die Haustafeln des Neuen Testaments' (Diss., U. Hamburg, 1959); E. Schweizer, 'Die Weltlichkeit des Neuen Testaments: die Haustafeln', in *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie* (W. Zimmerli FS), ed. R. Smend (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 1:397-413; his *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 213-220; James Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972); J. P. Sampley, 'And the Two Shall Become One Flesh': a Study of Traditions in Eph. 5:21-33 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1971); Klaus Thraide, 'Ärger mit Freiheit', in *Freunde in Christus werden*, ed. G. Scharffenorth (Gelnhausen: Buckhardthaus, 1977), 35-182; and his 'Zum Hintergrund der "Haustafeln" des Neuen Testaments' in *Pietas* (B. Köttling FS), ed. E. Dassmann (Munich: Aschendorff, 1980): 359-368; and David L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> W. Schrage, 'Zur Ethik der Neutestamentlichen Haustafeln', *NTS* 21, 1974/75, 1-22, esp. 19ff.

<sup>24</sup> W. Lillie, 'The Pauline House-tables', *ExpT* 86, 1974/75, 182.

<sup>25</sup> 'Die Haustafeln', 188f.; and his 'Ethical Lists', *IDP Sup.*, 546f.

<sup>26</sup> Schrage, 'Zur Ethik'; and P. T. O'Brien, *Colossians; Philemon* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 219-222.

order', based on the will of God; and (4). An apologetic concern for the impression of pagans.

Dibelius set the stage, in this as in so many things, by suggesting that the waning of eschatological fever led to the adoption of Hellenistic submission regulations, and a concept of good Christian citizenship.<sup>27</sup> As Jack Sanders has it, the church-codes reflect a movement 'away from the Pauline theological-eschatological grounding of ethics toward an unreflected ethic that is indistinguishable from good citizenship.'<sup>28</sup> This view has been rightly criticized by Crouch and others.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly enough, this view is contradicted by the exegetical evidence of Tit. 2 itself, specifically vv. 11–13, whose eschatological grounding of ethics finds a parallel in Rom. 13:12f. Dibelius overlooks the eschatological motif in his commentary on these verses.<sup>30</sup> A variation on this theme is found in the work of David Verner.<sup>31</sup> He argues that the Pastorals accommodate the church to the patriarchal order of the Roman household. While rejecting the motives for this compromise suggested by Dibelius, he believes that this model was gradually adopted by the church in the face of social tensions. The basic problems with this thesis, in my view, are that (1) he does not specify just exactly *why* the church would adopt this model, and (2) the Pastorals do not specify an ecclesiastical and social order as 'patriarchal' as Verner would believe. They seem to be an *ad hoc* response to widespread heresy rather than a new model for church government.

The second theory is that the church-codes are meant to suppress a nascent liberation movement for slaves and women among Christians.<sup>32</sup> This view, also, has difficulties with the

<sup>27</sup> Kolosser, 48ff.; and his *The Pastoral Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 19f., 39f.

<sup>28</sup> J. T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress: 1975), 88. Others who emphasize the waning of eschatology: Weidinger, 9f.; H. P. Wendland, 'Zur socialethischen Bedeutung der neutestamentlichen Haustafeln', in *Die Leibhaftigkeit des Wortes* (A. Köberle FS), ed. O. Michel (Hamburg: Furche Vlg., 1958), 38–46; S. Schulz, 'Evangelium und Welt: Hauptprobleme einer Ethik des Neuen Testament', in *Neues Testament und Christliche Existenz* (H. Braun FS), ed. H. D. Betz (Tübingen; Mohr, 1973), 483–501; R. P. Martin, 'Virtue', *NIDNTT*, 3:931f.

<sup>29</sup> Crouch, *The Origin*, 18–23; and Schrage, 9f.

<sup>30</sup> *Pastoral Epistles*, 143.

<sup>31</sup> *The Household of God* (Chico: Scholars Pr., 1983).

<sup>32</sup> Dibelius, 66f.; Crouch, 120–151; Dennis MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); Schroeder, 'Haustafeln', 81f., 151; J. M. Ford, 'A Note on Proto-Montanism in the Pastoral Epistles', *NTS* 17, 1970/71, 338–346; and Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 243–309.

exegetical evidence. The church-codes deal with the submission of children, who can hardly be imagined as part of a liberation movement. The church-codes, too, deal with submission to governmental authority, which cannot be explained by reference to rebellious movements (cf. Rom 13.1ff.). In some circles there is an uncritical identification of heresy with sexual equality, and orthodoxy with patriarchy in the first century A.D.: an identification that underplays the feminism of Scripture while overplaying the feminism of 'heretical' literature. In the end, it is hard to believe that the church-codes were meant to oppose a liberation movement among the churches.<sup>33</sup>

The third option, that the church and house-codes reflect an order established by the Creator, has more biblical grounding.<sup>34</sup> Although this is a popular belief, when carefully examined those passages which are supposed to defend this idea seem to point in another direction. Nowhere in the house- or church-codes is submission linked with creation, nor with the divine will. These ideas are brought forward by interpreters as the only logical basis for these submission commands: they are not found in the texts themselves. Usually reference is made to 1 Cor. 11:8f., or 1 Tim. 2:12ff. The first passage is simply misunderstood. The second does seem to point to some kind of creation order; but even on a conservative reading the issue at stake is silence and lack of authority (in the church, not the home). In any case, a creation-order is not the only interpretation one can give these difficult passages.<sup>35</sup> This position would be viable only if the church-codes themselves gave us no indication of their functions.

The fourth theory is developed by Peter Lippert and also

---

<sup>33</sup> See the criticisms of Schrage, 4ff.; Schweizer, *Colossians*, 215ff.; and R. J. Karris, 'The Function and Sitz im Leben of the Paraenetic Elements in the Pastoral Epistles' (Diss., Harvard, 1971), 109–117. The so-called 'feminism' of gnostic literature and apocryphal acts is actually inferior to that of Paul who proclaims the equality of men and women as they are, 'in the Lord' or 'in Christ' (Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 11:10–12), while the non-Biblical literature only allows for women leaders if they de-feminize themselves and become like men (Act. Paul and Thecla, 25; 40; Gos. Thom. 114 'every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.').

<sup>34</sup> Kähler, *Die Frau*, 198–202; Spicq, *Pastorales*, 1:386f.; G. W. Knight, III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977).

<sup>35</sup> For a criticism of the idea of a 'creation order', see H. Thieliicke, *Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:274ff., 439; 3:13; and Scanzoni and Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be*, 23–37. See on 1 Cor. 11, my 'Paul on Women'; and on 1 Tim. 2, A. D. B. Spencer, 'Eve at Ephesus', *JETS* 17 (1974), 215–222; P. B. Payne, 'Libertarian Women at Ephesus', *Trinity J.* n.s. 2 (1981), 169–197; and J. K. Howard, 'Neither Male nor Female', *EQ* 55, 1983, 31–42.



independently by David Balch.<sup>36</sup> There does seem to be some concern for the opinion of unbelievers especially in the church-codes of 1 Pet. and the Pastorals.

Balch demonstrates that the church-codes represent a standard Greek and Roman household ethic, both in form and in content: an ethic other religious communities also had to deal with. The Roman ideals for the subordination of wives and daughters resulted in a stereotyped criticism of the Dionysus cult, the Isis cult, and other religious groups that elevated the status of women. This criticism was basically that these cults produced immorality and sedition, especially among women.<sup>37</sup> Balch compares this background with the concern in 1 Pet. for the submission of wives to their husbands, so that they may be won to Christ. A husband of this ethos expected his wife to follow his religion, and would not accept for himself a faith which took his wife away from the home, and her customary place and gods. Thus conversion to Christianity divided households with pagan masters, and caused problems for Christian wives, slaves, and children, since the new converts refused to worship the household gods. Christians in such a situation faced persecution because of their faith. Balch notes, therefore, that one of the functions of the 1 Pet. house-code was:

to reduce tension between society and the churches to stop the slander. Christians had to conform to the expectations of Hellenistic-Roman society so that society would cease criticizing the new cult.<sup>38</sup>

Peter Lippert, in a neglected but important study, examines the Pastorals and 1 Pet., and demonstrates that a major theme in the ethic of these epistles is good conduct on the part of the Christians as a witness to the non-Christian world.<sup>39</sup> He does not emphasize the problem of 'slander' so much as the missionary motive behind the call for irreproachable behavior. Lippert is weak where Balch is strong (i.e., the Hellenistic literature). Taken in tandem, Lippert and Balch clearly demonstrate the superiority of their view. The function of the church-codes (but *not* the house-codes) is a missionary one. Their concern is for the good conduct of Christians in the world, (1) to stop the slander, and (2) to be a 'wordless' witness to unbelievers. An examination of the church-

---

<sup>36</sup> Balch, *Let Women*; Peter Lippert, *Leben als Zeugnis* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1968); and this theme is mentioned by Jeremias, 72; Spicq, 2:622; Sampley, 'One Flesh', 22; Fee, xxiv; and Fiorenza, *In Memory*, 232 et passim who incorrectly attributes this motive to *all* of the house-codes (251-284)!

<sup>37</sup> Balch, 63, 74.

<sup>38</sup> Balch, 88.

<sup>39</sup> *Leben*, 17-84; 50-54 examines Tit. 2:1-10.

code of Tit. 2:1–10 will demonstrate that Lippert and Balch are on the right track.

At first glance, Tit. 2 seems an obscure place to examine Paul's rationale for the ethic of submission. Yet this text unit presents excellent possibilities for answering our question. Better known church- and house-codes do not have such lengthy rationale clauses. By 'rationale' I mean the fourth part of a scheme discovered by Schroeder to lie behind the commands in these codes: (1) the party addressed, (2) the exhortation, (3) a connecting word, like *hina* (so that), and (4) a rationale clause.<sup>40</sup> Since Tit. 2 gives some of the most varied and numerous rationales for the command to be in submission, this makes it an excellent place to start an examination of the reason for commanding women to submit to their husbands.

The ethic of Tit. 2 is just what one would expect from the society of the day. Paul has borrowed ethical norms and terms, and applied them to the church in Crete. As Barrett notes concerning the section on young women, 'the language used is paralleled in many honorific inscriptions, i.e., the author considers the civic virtues acknowledged in the Hellenistic world worthy of Christian imitation.'<sup>41</sup> Words like *philandros* (husband-lover), *philoteknos* (children-lover), *hagnos* (holy), and *oikourgos* (worker at home) are typical of the Hellenistic domestic ethic, as well as the command to submit. The terms used to admonish men are also typical, such as *sōphrōn* (prudent), *nēphalios* (sober), and *semnos* (serious). Although these are borrowed terms, the selection is interesting. There is a *distinct* emphasis on being serious and self-controlled: on not letting sin or foolishness gain the upper hand in Christian behaviour.

Structurally, the pericope breaks down into five sections. In contrast to the false teacher (*su de*, 1.1), Titus is to teach: (1) the older men; (2) the older women, who in turn teach (3) the younger women; then (4) the young men, and finally (5) the slaves are spoken of. What Titus is to teach is not expressed in the imperative, but with the verb 'to be' (*einai*), so that the entire section really refers back to the command, 'teach' in 1.1. Both younger men and older women are to act 'likewise' (*hōsaútōs*),

<sup>40</sup> Schroeder, 'Haustafeln', 92. Cf. a similar schema in Verner, *Household*, 92–106.

<sup>41</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 135. See further the critical commentaries, e.g. Brox, 292ff.; Karris, 'The Function', 88–95 *et passim*; and BAG, under the words below pp. 11, 540, 754, 810, 866, 869. On the use of Hellenistic material in Paul's ethic, see V. P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 81–91, 151.

that is, with the same sobriety as the older men. The sections are marked off by this word, and by *hina*, giving the passage a fairly obvious structure.

The list of virtues for young women (v. 5) seems especially offensive to modern readers. It assumes that all young women are married, or soon plan to be so, and should meekly work at home and submit to their husbands. What is significant, however, is not these very typical Hellenistic virtues, but the *rationale* Paul gives for adopting them in the church, viz., 'so that (*hina*) the Word of God may not be blasphemed'. The Word of God (*ho logos tou theou*) is especially significant for Pauline thought, and cannot be a simple gloss for the church or her teachings.<sup>42</sup> It refers here to the gospel itself.<sup>43</sup> The gospel of Jesus Christ is at stake in the actions of these young women.

The young men, too, are called to be prudent (v. 6). Paul adds a personal touch by referring to Titus here (*seauton*).<sup>44</sup> Paul's concern is not so much for actions, as it is for words. In his teaching, Titus must be sound (*aphthorian*) and serious (*semnotēta*), with a soundness (*hugie*) of word that is above reproach (*akatagnoston*) (v. 7).<sup>45</sup> There is an unexpressed fear here, of saying something that might cause the church to be further persecuted. This might be expected from Paul, who was imprisoned, beaten, and brought before the civil authorities (according to his own letters, and Acts) for his *teaching*.<sup>46</sup> This is clearly demonstrated by the rationale in v. 8: 'so that (*hina*) our opponents may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say about us'. As Dibelius has it, 'the entire list of virtues is written in view of the opponents'.<sup>47</sup> But what

<sup>42</sup> Karris, 120f., examines the Pastorals and concludes that the paraenetic elements in them are meant to bolster the church's *teaching* by pointing to its effectiveness in producing good citizens, according to the standard of 'good' at that time. I believe, however, that the rationales I examine support my thesis. Karris himself comes to conclusions that differ from his dissertation in his 'The Background and Significance of the Polemic of the Pastoral Epistles', *JBL* 92, 1973, 549-564.

<sup>43</sup> See 1 Thes. 2:13, Col. 1:5. Also, see J.H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles* (1899; rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 67, 168; G. Kittel, *TDNT*, 4: 114-119; B. Klappert, 'Word', *NIDNTT*, 3:1110-1114; L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:114f.

<sup>44</sup> Brox, *ad loc.*

<sup>45</sup> Lippert, *Leben*, 29-57 argues for the importance of 'irreproachableness' for the Pastorals as a whole (e.g., p. 36). See p. 51 on this verse.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 6:3-10, 11:23-33; Phil. 1:12-18; Acts 9:20-23, 13:44-50; 16:20f., 18:12ff., 21:28, 24:5, 12f., 26:20f. On the nature and historicity of the charges against Paul in Acts, see A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: U. Pr., 1963), 48-57, 80ff., 99-102.

<sup>47</sup> *Pastoral Epistles*, 141.

opponents are these? They are probably not the theological opponents that one usually reads about in the secondary literature on the Pastorals (cf. Tit. 1:9–11). The opponents in view in Tit. 2 are to be shamed by the good conduct and speech of the church. Surely only because they have lied in slandering her (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14). These opponents will be shamed in the eyes of the community (perhaps even the judge, Acts 24:10–20), because their charges against the new religion are false. The opponents Paul has in mind are not within the church, but outside of it. They are her social and legal opponents. As Lock says, ‘the main thought is of pagan criticism.’<sup>48</sup>

Finally, slaves are called to submit to their masters, and to please them in everything (v. 9). Again, the terms used are typical. The rationale given is, ‘so that (*hina*) the teachings of God our Saviour may in all things be made attractive (*kosmōsin*) (v. 10). The beautification or attractiveness of the teaching, and not its soundness or correctness, points to a missionary concern. The teachings of God can be made attractive to the pagan master, by the Christian slave’s willing obedience; or at the very least the master will not slander the gospel. The parallel rationale of 1 Tim. 6:1 bears this out: ‘so that (*hina*) the name of God, and our teaching, may not be blasphemed’ (cf. 1 Pet. 2:18). Paul is definitely concerned about pagan masters who might slander the new faith. As Bernard tells us, ‘For slaves to have refused obedience would have brought immediate discredit on the Christian Faith, as subversive of the foundations of heathen society.’<sup>49</sup>

Having examined the theories and the actual text of one church-code, we are now in a position to answer the question that began this study: if Paul is an egalitarian, why did he call women to submit? The rationales given in Tit. 2 point clearly in one direction: *for the sake of the gospel*. Paul’s concern is for the advancement of the church in the face of first century opposition. It was a ‘common belief’, F. F. Bruce notes, ‘that Christianity was a seditious movement’ in the NT era.<sup>50</sup> It was therefore necessary to yield the right of women Christians to equality with men, so that the gospel could go forth.<sup>51</sup> Although Paul knew women to

<sup>48</sup> W. Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), 142. See also Lippert, 50ff.

<sup>49</sup> *Pastoral Epistles*, 92.

<sup>50</sup> *The Defense of the Gospel in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977<sup>2</sup>), 54.

<sup>51</sup> For this concluding section I assume that the thesis of this essay is correct for the entire period during the last part of Paul’s life when the Pastorals (or at the very least the ideas they contain) originated.

be equal in Christ to men, he soon discovered that they had to submit to their pagan husbands, if the church was to survive, and to avoid greater slander and persecution. (Reference must be made, again, to Balch's study of the Roman condemnation of sects that elevated the status of women).

The concept of suffering for Christ, and of yielding one's rights for the gospel's sake, is found throughout the NT. Paul was not asking the Christian women to do anything he was not willing to do himself. He knew that the one who has faith in Christ is free, but it is a freedom characterized by a willingness to be obedient.<sup>52</sup> Paul puts this principle forward very clearly at 1 Cor. 10:32f.

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God, even as I try to please everyone in every way; because I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

One might call this concept 'missionary accommodation'. Paul was willing to be flexible about non-essentials, in order to fit into various parts of the Roman world.<sup>53</sup> He was willing to give up certain rights and privileges so that the world might be won to Christ. He called on the churches to follow this lead. Hahn rightly notes that in the Pastorals, 'an essential missionary intention is evident.'<sup>54</sup>

I believe Paul (like a good moral philosopher) structured his values according to an overall ethic. His greatest concern was for the health and safety of his churches and for the evangelization of the Gentile world. This meant that women had to be submissive to their husbands at home (if they were not so already) to avoid greater persecution for them, and slander and persecution for the church and her male and female leaders.<sup>55</sup> This meant that individual women had to suffer, so that Christians could be safe, and non-Christians could be saved. This suffering for the sakes of others is, after all, an essential aspect of what the new religion meant by *agapē*. The Pastorals make a choice between two evils: the destruction of the church as a whole, including women and

<sup>52</sup> For a broad discussion of this theme, see V. P. Furnish, *Ethic*, 176–206; and Peter Richardson, *Paul's Ethic of Freedom* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979).

<sup>53</sup> H. Chadwick, 'All Things to All Men', *NTS* 1, 1954/55, 261–275; P. Richardson and P. W. Gooch, 'Accommodation Ethics', *TynB* 29, 1978, 89–142.

<sup>54</sup> F. Hahn, *Das Verständnis der Mission im Neuen Testament* (Neukirchen; Neukirchener Vlg., 1963), 123.

<sup>55</sup> For evidence of women leadership in the early church, see Fiorenza, *In Memory*; although I cannot agree with her interpretation of the Pauline corpus, as a book in church history this is a profound work.

slaves; or the suffering of women and slaves for the sake of the church and her good news.<sup>56</sup>

Today, of course, we live in a different situation. If anything, the church is slandered because it continues to insist on the submission of women: quite the reverse of Paul's day. Such an insistence is based on tradition, however, not Scripture. Properly understood, Paul's command for women to submit—both in house- and church-codes—is perfectly in harmony with his overall egalitarianism. The ethic of the Pastorals, as Trummer has shown, is not a falling away from the true Pauline position, but a working out of what it means to be saved in the midst of the world.<sup>57</sup> Any attempt to work out our salvation today must, I believe, include the equality of men and women in home and church. The rationales of the *hina* clauses of Tit. 2 demonstrate to me that Paul's concern was not to lay down a law for all time, but to give temporary marching orders for the church, so that the gospel could go forth to all peoples.

---

<sup>56</sup> Crouch brings this point out, p. 160. I believe that social change or 'liberation' as a missional priority takes a back seat to the survival of the church herself. Cf. the view of Fiorenza, 316f., 334.

<sup>57</sup> *Paulustradition*, 227–240; see also the fine discussion of submission in 1 Pet., in Goppelt, *Theology*, 2:168ff.