Sanctification and Oneness in 1 Corinthians with Implications for the Case of 'Mixed Marriages' (1 Corinthians 7.12–16)*

STEPHEN C. BARTON

Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University, United Kingdom.
Email: stephen@the-bartons.com

This essay is a social-scientific study of Paul's deployment of holiness language in 1 Corinthians. Specifically, an interpretation of holiness is offered to explain Paul's argument in 1 Cor 7.12–16 in favour of non-separation in the case of a believer married to a non-believer. For Paul, holiness involves participation in the oneness of God interpreted christologically. This participation is embodied in the holiness-as-oneness of the church. In relations between believers and unbelievers, purity rules to do with sex and marriage carry a significant symbolic burden. In some cases, clear lines of demarcation are drawn. Other cases constitute grey areas; and the suggestion here is that 'mixed marriages' are one such. For Paul, holiness is a matter of neither genealogical nor cultic purity. Rather, it has a boundary-transcending quality. In the case of a mixed marriage, the unbelieving partner, together with the children, is sanctified by remaining in oneness with the believing partner. Paul's concern for the oneness of the church spills over into a concern for the oneness of the household.

Keywords: Pauline ethics, sanctification, holiness, oneness, mixed marriage, children, social-scientific interpretation

1. Introduction: Unholy Fragmentation in the Corinthian Church

Sanctification is an all-pervasive theme in 1 Corinthians. This is signalled from the outset by the descriptors Paul uses of his addressees. In terms of vocation, they are 'those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints (ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις)' (1.2; cf. 1.30; 6.1, 2; 14.33; 16.1, 15). This vocation has been imprinted ritually in baptism: 'you were washed, you were sanctified (ἡγιάσθητε), you were justified …' (6.11). In terms

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of identity, they are sacral: God's (holy) temple, indwelt by God's (Holy) Spirit (3.16–17) – which is a matter not only of the body corporate, but of each member's body individually (6.19). In terms of moral formation and disposition, the ideal is a matter of single-minded devotion to the Lord (Jesus), a *habitus* or way of life understood as 'how to be holy (ἵνα ᾖ ἁγία) in body and spirit' (7.34). In terms of group practice, they are to greet one another with a 'holy kiss (ἐν φιλήματι ἁγίῳ)' (16.20). Such a preponderance of the language of holiness or sanctification, running from the beginning of the letter to its end, leaves us in no doubt that Paul is engaged in a process of identity-formation and consolidation, and that he wants to help the Corinthian believers to understand themselves more fully in holiness terms.[1]

The reason for this is not hard to discern. From the various issues Paul deals with in the letter, it appears that the Corinthian Gentile converts are allowing their common life in Christ to be polluted by the ways of the world with which they were familiar from their pre-conversion days. Put otherwise, their socialisation into the Christian way is incomplete. They are bringing into the church notions of moral and spiritual superiority, and practices of competitiveness and faction, that are a contradiction of who they have become by baptism. In consequence, the church is fragmenting. As Paul says, in the first of many exhortations in the letter, 'I appeal (παρακαλῶ) to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you (ἐν ὑμῖν σχίσματα), but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you (ἔριδες ἐν ὑμῖν) ...' (1 Cor 1.10).[2]

The unity of the church as 'the body of Christ' is being destroyed, and the lines separating church and world are becoming blurred, even obliterated. Among the presenting issues are matters to do with the body: sex and marriage, diet and meal practices, and cult. So Paul's holiness language and holiness theology represent a pedagogy for competing factions with the aim of encouraging a common mind and shared practice. Only by helping the Corinthian believers to recover a self-understanding of who they are in Christ as the sanctified, Spirit-filled, eschatological people of God will their differences be transcended and the obstacles to unity be overcome.

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1 Of course, the corollary of Paul's use of holiness language of the Corinthian believers is his use of the language of impurity or defilement of that to which he is opposed (e.g. 1 Cor 3.17, 'If anyone destroys (φθείρει) God's temple, God will destroy (φθερεῖ) him'; also 8.7, '... and their conscience, being weak, is defiled (μολύνεται).')

2 Cf. the magisterial analysis by M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

2. Holiness as Membership and Oneness

Holiness language is appropriate for the task because, in Paul's scriptural tradition and Jewish piety (including his pre-conversion identity and practice as a Pharisee), holiness is the language and practice of *membership* of God's elect people and, as such, marks out lines of inclusion, on the one hand, and separation or exclusion, on the other. Important in marking out these lines is the intensifying binary imagery of purity and impurity developed in an elaborate system of natural symbols. In the words of the Holiness Code of Leviticus 19–26: 'I am the Lord your God; I have separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not bring abomination on yourselves by animal or by bird or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine' (Lev 20.24b–26; cf. 19.2).[3]

But holiness is not only a language of membership – specifically, covenant membership – it is also a language of *unity* and the practices of a common life that make unity sustainable.[4] Since, as confessed in the words of the *Shema*, God is 'one' (Deut 6.4), holiness – understood as participation in and imitation of God – implies and expresses *oneness*. This oneness is dynamic; and it is salvific. It is the language and practice of resistance and restoration. For what it represents, and in the life of the people embodies, is the claim that there is one God who calls into being one people to live in wholehearted obedience to one Law and to worship him in one temple, thus bringing heaven and earth into oneness, and restoring peace both to a cosmos that has fallen into rebellion and to a humanity alienated from God and from itself by sin. In the words of Zech 14.9, 'And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one.'

This eschatological hope finds expression at Qumran. Here the oneness of the community is a prime concern, a concern epitomised in the unique self-designation יהד ('that which is one') which occurs some sixty times in the *Community Rule* as well as in other texts from Qurman.[5] This concern is elaborated positively, in terms of a priestly, 'graded holiness' ideology grounded in strict obedience to Torah and the rule of the community, and negatively, both in the avoidance of

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3 Cf. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

4 Cf. S. C. Barton, 'The Unity of Humankind as a Theme in Biblical Theology', *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig Barthlomew *et al.*; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004) 233–58.

5 Cf. C. Claussen and M. T. Davis, 'The Concept of Unity at Qumran', *Qumran Studies: New Approaches, New Questions* (ed. M. T. Davis and B. Strawn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 232–53, at 233.

causes of defilement (understood as symbols of what is not whole or complete or perfect) and in the avoidance of practices expressive of disunity. But as well as expressing the self-understanding and ethos of the community in its internal relations and practices, it also functions polemically, even offensively – as if to say, '*This* is the true temple where God is worshipped truly and where heaven and earth meet, *not in other places and groups*, and most of all, not in Jerusalem.'

Given that unity or oneness is understood as a manifestation of the sanctification that accompanies the presence of God and the breaking in of the kingdom of God, it is not surprising that sanctification expressed as eschatological unity is also in evidence in the texts of nascent Christianity. In the Gospel of John, for example, Jesus is the one 'whom the Father *sanctified* (ἡγίασεν) and sent into the world' (John 10.36), who himself, in union with the Father, prays that the Father will both sanctify his followers in the truth and make them one, as Father and Son are one (John 17.17–19, 20–2) – all this, of course, counterposed polemically against a world and a people in darkness, sin and rebellion inspired by the devil.[6] In Ephesians, to take another example, the reader is offered an extraordinary vision of cosmic reunification 'in Christ' (cf. Eph 1.10). This reality is displayed on earth in the church, in the making of one new humanity (ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον) out of two (Eph 2.15), a new oneness represented dynamically as growing into 'a holy temple in the Lord ... a dwelling place for God' (Eph 2.21).[7]

I draw two conclusions. First, in the moral and symbolic worlds of Paul, holiness language, concepts and practices – grounded in a conception of the oneness and holiness of the God who rules the cosmos – are deployed for the construction and maintenance of individual and group identity *as well as* for the construction and maintenance of group unity. Second, such deployment occurs not uncommonly in a context of crisis or controversy from without or within, requiring the marking out of lines of inclusion and cohesion on the one hand, and of separation and distinction on the other.

This is certainly what we find in Paul in 1 Corinthians. Just as the oneness in sanctification of the people of Israel is grounded in the confession in the *Shema* of the oneness of the holy God, who is to be loved and obeyed with an undivided heart, so too is Paul's exhortation to oneness in sanctification grounded in the *Shema*:[8]

> Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'no idol in the world really exists', and that 'there is no God but one'. Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth – as in fact there are

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6 Cf. C. T. R. Hayward, 'The Lord is One: Reflections on the Theme of Unity in St. John's Gospel from a Jewish Perspective', *Exploring Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (ed. L. T. Stuckenbruck and W. North; London: T&T Clark, 2004) 138–54.

7 Cf. M. Turner, 'Mission and Meaning in Terms of "Unity" in Ephesians', *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell* (ed. A. Billington *et al.*; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995) 138–66.

8 Cf. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant* (London: T&T Clark, 1991) 120–36.

> many gods and many lords – yet for us there is *one God*, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and *one Lord*, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist (1 Cor 8.4–6).

Here, the words of the *Shema* are deployed – and at the same time *intensified christologically* – as the grounds for calling the Corinthians to a oneness that bears witness to the oneness of God and Christ. Noteworthy also is that this deployment is made in a context of controversy and crisis: the eating of εἰδωλόθυτα by 'the strong' is a cause of offence to 'the weak' and, as a result, the oneness of the church is at risk. Interestingly, when Paul turns to idolatrous practice proper (i.e. εἰδωλολατρεία), with its potential to destroy completely the unity in sanctity of the church, it is once again to an opposing, sanctifying oneness that he appeals: 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a *sharing* (κοινωνία) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a *sharing* (κοινωνία) in the body of Christ? Because there is *one* bread (εἷς ἄρτος), we who are many are *one* body (ἓν σῶμα), for we all partake of the *one* bread (τοῦ ἑνὸς ἄρτου)' (1 Cor 10.16–17). Interestingly also, one complex of material–symbolic practices to do with food and commensality whose impact is divisive is replaced by another complex of material–symbolic practices to do with a meal identified as '*the Lord's* meal' whose impact is (intended to be) unitive.

3. Πορνεία and εἰδωλολατρεία/εἰδωλόθυτα as Boundary-Markers

The issues that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians include πορνεία and idolatry (εἰδωλολατρεία) in the form of eating 'things sacrificed to idols' (εἰδωλόθυτα). Both of these have to do with the body – individual, corporate, and even cosmic – and both are boundary-marking issues. This is not surprising given Paul's background. The moral world of Judaism was constructed in part on avoidance, and the focus of avoidance was often epitomised in terms of πορνεία and εἰδωλολατρεία as practices and attachments that defile. This is because πορνεία and εἰδωλολατρεία were understood as characterising the unholy Other, the nations to whom the law of God had not been revealed, or the lawless within the people of God who prostituted themselves by whoring after other gods (cf. Jer 3.1–5; Ezek 16; 23; Hos 4.12; 5.4). So πορνεία and εἰδωλολατρεία are potent symbolic and practical boundary-markers; and policing the boundaries so constituted is a way of distinguishing and separating the holy from the unholy.[9]

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9 Cf. S. C. Barton, 'Food Rules, Sex Rules, and the Prohibition of Idolatry: What's the Connection? An Essay in New Testament Theology', *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. S. C. Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2007) 141–62.

But with the revelation of God's grace in the death and resurrection of God's Son and the gift of the eschatological Spirit – the 'Spirit *of holiness* (πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης)' (Rom 1.4) – appropriated in baptism, the identity of the elect has undergone a radical transformation. A new oneness has come into being. Indeed, Paul can talk in both cosmic and anthropological terms of the coming into being of a 'new creation (καινὴ κτίσις)' (2 Cor 5.17). God's holiness has, as it were, moved from a defensive mode to an offensive, imperial mode. From being withheld – or, better, confined – it is overflowing. In consequence, the lines separating the holy from the unholy have to be redrawn. Instead of running *around* ethnic Judaism and separating off Jews from Gentiles, they now run *through* both, separating believers from unbelievers.

In a rhetorically well-crafted letter, Paul raises the issue of πορνεία in 1 Corinthians 5–7, and the issue of εἰδωλόθυτα in 1 Corinthians 8–10. For present purposes, I will focus on issues around πορνεία (and its avoidance), in 1 Corinthians 5–7. In particular, I will concentrate on the marriage rules in 1 Corinthians 7, and the interesting case of 'mixed marriages', dealt with by Paul at somewhat surprising length in 1 Cor 7.12–16. Nevertheless, we will see that there are significant similarities between Paul's strategy for dealing with πορνεία and εἰδωλόθυτα, understanding which may help to explain the Christian *halacha* Paul offers in relation to mixed marriages.

In brief, and appealing to an important study by Peder Borgen,[10] if, in relation to Jewish and Christian participation in pagan cults, consideration of appropriate practice takes the form 'yes', 'no', 'how far?', might not the same kind of consideration be involved in relation to sex and marriage? To put it another way, using boundary-marking language, if there are *grey areas* in relation to cultic involvement, as well as clear areas of black and white, may there not also be grey areas in relation to sex and marriage? And does what Paul says about mixed marriages show that this is a grey area and that black and white rulings are inappropriate? How much *mixing* between believers and unbelievers is permissible, in what spheres of life, and at what level of association and intimacy? For a start, we notice that Paul chides the rigorists in the church whose policy is *not to mix* (noting συναναμίγνυσθαι in 1 Cor 5.9) with 'immoral persons (τοῖς πόρνοις)' at all. As he observes, the logical conclusion is: 'you would then need to go out of the world' (1 Cor 5.10). But more on this anon.

4. Sex Rules and Marriage Rules as Natural Symbols

In social-scientific perspective, one of the ways of establishing and sustaining group identity is by the marking out of boundary-lines separating and

10 P. Borgen, '"Yes," "No," "How Far?": The Participation of Jews and Christians in Pagan Cults' in his *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (London: T&T Clark, 1996) 15–43.

distinguishing insider from outsider or even insider from insider. The binary opposites so identified have their mutual identities reinforced by symbols that lend themselves to polarisation and separation. In this process of moral and cultural differentiation, what Mary Douglas identifies as 'natural symbols' are particularly effective.[11] They are effective because they have the appearance of being *given* in the 'natural' order of things. But it should also be said that these symbols lend themselves – and are effective – not only because they allow differentiation and distance, the separation of insider and outsider, but also because they underpin the *internal* life of the group or society as well, helping its members to order their lives.

In ancient Israel, one of the ways holiness was articulated was through the binary pair pure/impure. The origins and rationale of the purity system are a matter of ongoing debate, and need not detain us here.[12] The important point is that this system was understood as written into the created order. As such, it permeated the people's common life, running through it and around it.

One representation of the purity system was a distinction between things that may and may not be mixed (cf. Lev 19.19). This included, importantly, the classification of *people* that may and may not be mixed. Of direct relevance to the present discussion is that these lines of classification were worked out in relation to sex rules and marriage rules – that is, rules that governed who may and may not be 'mixed' (or *become one*). Such rules, given classic articulation in the so-called 'laws of prohibited degrees' in the Holiness Code (at Lev 18 and 20), governed marriage practices within the polity of Israel and, subsequently, Judaism.[13] Importantly, according to the Code, marriage rules within the covenant community were inflected in terms of degrees of purity. For example, of a member of the priestly caste it is said: 'He shall marry only a woman who is a virgin. A widow, or a divorced woman, or a woman who has been defiled, a prostitute, these he shall not marry. He shall marry a virgin of his own kin, that he may not profane his offspring among his kin; for I am the Lord; I sanctify him' (Lev 21.13–15).

Such rules also governed marriage practices between Israel and the nations, between Jews and Gentiles. With respect to the latter, the Jews were noted in antiquity for the perceived prohibition placed on exogamy, on marrying outside the group – what today we might call 'mixed marriage'. According to Hecataeus of Abdera, 'As to marriage and the burial of the dead, he [Moses] saw to it that their customs should differ widely from those of other men.'[14] And according to

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11 M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); *eadem, Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1973).

12 Cf. J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

13 Cf. O. L. Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 7–29.

14 See Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 40.3.8, cited in D. L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholas Press, 1981) 73.

Tacitus, 'Toward every other people they [the Jews] feel only hate and enmity. They sit apart at meals, and they sleep apart, and although as a race, they are prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women ... '[15]

In fact, there is no universal prohibition in the Torah on Jewish intermarriage with Gentiles. As Christine Hayes points out, citing Exod 34.15–16 and Deut 7.3–4, the prohibitions refer only to the seven Canaanite nations, and are 'based on the fear that intimate contact with Canaanites will lead Israelites to imitate their idolatrous and immoral ways ... The continuous existence of the Canaanites on the soil will, it is feared, lead to commensality, social relations, intermarriage, and finally religious apostasy as the Israelites join in the idolatry of their foreign spouses.'[16] A particularly articulate expression of this fear comes in Philo, *Spec* 3.5.29:

> But also, he [Moses] says, do not enter into the partnership of marriage with a member of a foreign nation, lest some day conquered by the force of opposing customs you surrender and stray unawares from the path that leads to piety and turn aside into a pathless wild. And though perhaps you yourself will hold your ground steadied from your earliest years by the admirable instructions instilled into you by your parents, with the holy laws always as their keynote, there is much to be feared for your sons and daughters. It may well be that they, enticed by spurious customs which they prefer to the genuine, are likely to unlearn the honour due to the one God, and that is the first and last stage of supreme misery.

But matters are more complex. What happens when consensus over what constitutes 'purity' and 'impurity' breaks down? If purity rules constitute a symbolic system that distinguishes one people from another, one group from another, disagreement over what constitutes purity and what defiles will precipitate group fragmentation. This is precisely what appears evident in Second Temple Judaism. Divergence over what constitutes purity and what defiles contributes to factionalism and the development of inner-Jewish sectarianism.

This has been well demonstrated by Hayes, according to whom purity in Second Temple Judaism was understood in terms ritual, moral or genealogical. The differences of emphasis placed on these various kinds of purity (and related impurity) contribute to distinctions between different sects or movements within Judaism. They contribute also to how boundaries are drawn between Jews and Gentiles, and to the relative degree of permeability of those boundaries. In Hayes' view, particularly decisive for sect-group definition is the genealogical (or 'holy seed') ideology of purity that comes to the fore in Ezra-Nehemiah in

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15 Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5, cited in Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, 73.

16 C. E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 24–5.

the period after the exile (cf. Ezra 9–10).[17] Here, given the understanding that membership of God's holy and elect people is a matter of ethnicity, of being a child of Israel, the identity of progeny (issuing from sexual relations within marriage) has to be clear and able to be protected. The prohibition on 'marrying out' offered this clarity and protection. In particular, it offered clarity of identity *at a time of crisis*. In an important statement, worth quoting at length, Hayes summarises her argument thus:

> Since biblical times, the key markers of Israelite identity have been complex. Cultic practice was only one criterion of ancient Israelite identity. Genealogical descent and the myth of belonging to a historic community with a common past and a shared destiny were also important elements in the subjective self-understanding of ancient Israelites as a group distinct from Gentile 'others.' I argue that the most important variable in Second Temple constructions of Jewish identity, and, by extension, constructions of the boundary between Jew and Gentile was the genealogical component of Jewish identity. Ancient Jews placed different emphasis on the role of genealogy in determining identity and in maintaining the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. That is, ancient Jews placed different emphases on *genealogical purity* as a marker of Jewish identity. The degree to which Jewish identity was based on birth and lineage is the degree to which the boundary between Jew and Gentile was impermeable. Groups that defined their Jewishness mostly or exclusively in genealogical terms established an impermeable boundary between Jews and Gentiles. Not only was it impossible for Gentiles to become Jews, but also violations of the genealogical distinction between the two groups (i.e. interethnic sexual unions) were anathema. By contrast, groups that defined their Jewishness in primarily moral or religious terms established a permeable boundary between Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles who adopted the moral and religious characteristics of Jewish identity could become Jews of a particular sort: Jews of nonnative birth. Insofar as certain privileges or functions within Jewish society might be genealogically based, these nonnative Jews (or converts) retained a distinctive identity within the larger group. Finally, any group that might define Jewish identity in *exclusively* moral or religious terms would establish a boundary between Jews and Gentiles so permeable as to allow full assimilation in every respect.[18]

Awareness of the diversity of sources of impurity – ritual, moral and genealogical – and of the ways in which divergence over purity and impurity contributed to the formation and maintenance of sects and parties within Judaism, is crucial, not only for understanding early Judaism, but also for understanding early

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17 On marriage matters in Ezra 9-10 and their afterlife, see most recently H. K. Harrington, 'Intermarriage in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Legacy of Ezra-Nehemiah', *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period* (ed. C. Frevel; New York: T&T Clark, 2011) 251–79; also, D. P. Moffat, *Ezra's Social Drama: Identity Formation, Marriage and Social Conflict in Ezra 9 and 10* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

18 Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 8–9 (emphasis original).

Christianity, itself, of course, originating as a breakaway reform movement within Judaism. It is likely that Paul and the factions in the church of Corinth were shaped, at least in part, by purity issues interpreted and embodied variously in relation to sex and marriage.

5. Sex Rules and Marriage Rules as Constitutional Issues

But another angle is worth attention. Looking ahead to Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 7, it is at least arguable that what he is doing there, as the self-identified 'father' of the community, is a *constitutional* matter and therefore properly his to deal with in helping the Corinthians to order their common life wisely. Part of the wider context within which Paul's advice makes sense has to do with sex rules and marriage rules as matters relevant to the right ordering of society. In other words, they are matters of a *constitutional* kind. As a social world in the making, constitutional issues are important, including the right ordering of human relations in ways that make for social harmony. Marriage rules and relations fall within this orbit.[19]

Josephus offers a significant analogy in his account of the 'constitution' founded by Moses. In emphasising how the constitution of the Jews has at its heart the importance of the comprehensive application of the law to everyday life and matters of domestic routine, he says:

> Starting from the very beginning with the food of which we partake from infancy and the private life of the home, he [Moses] left nothing, however insignificant, to the discretion or caprice of the individual. What meats a man should abstain from, and what he may enjoy; with what persons he should associate; what period should be devoted respectively to strenuous labour and to rest – for all this our leader made the Law the standard and rule, that we might live under it as under a father and master, and be guilty of no sin through wilfulness or ignorance'. (*C. Ap.* 2.173–4)[20]

Here attention is drawn to three sets of 'natural symbols' that define the constitution of the people and offer boundary markers: food and meal practices, social intercourse (very likely including marriage rules) and Sabbath observance.

Later, against detractors who accuse the Jews of being anti-social, Josephus draws a significant distinction in the Mosaic constitution between an ethic of hospitality towards outsiders on the one hand, and a ban on exogamy on the other:

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19 On Aristotle on *oikonomia* (household management) within the context of his work on the constitution of the city-state, see Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive*, 33–8.

20 Cited in J. M. G. Barclay, 'Matching Theory and Practice: Josephus's Constitutional Ideal and Paul's Strategy in Corinth', *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide* (ed. T. E. Pedersen: Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 139–63, at 147.

> To all who desire to come and live under the same laws with us, he [Moses] gives a gracious welcome, holding that it is not family ties alone which constitute relationship, but agreement in the principles of conduct. On the other hand, it was not his pleasure that casual visitors should be admitted [noting αναμίγνυσθαι] to the intimacies of our daily life. (*C. Ap.* 2.210)

Significantly, when it comes to demonstrating the Jews' unquestioning adherence to the Law and their disciplined refusal to allow the Law to be undermined by individual choice, the example Josephus cites at length is the revolt of Zimri (Zambrias) concerning intermarriage with Midianite women (*Ant.* 4.126–55; cf. Num 25).[21] Clearly, marriage rules in general, and the question of intermarriage in particular, play an important role in marking and maintaining the Jewish constitution based on the Torah.[22]

   Outside the Jewish constitution and the place given to marriage rules there, mention could also be made of another contemporary analogy, the efforts of Augustus to be 'the author of the best possible Constitution'[23] by reforming Rome's marriage laws:[24]

> The existing laws that Augustus revised, and the new ones that he enacted, dealt, among other matters, with extravagance, adultery, unchastity, bribery, and the encouragement of marriage in the Senatorial and Equestrian Orders. His marriage law being more rigorously framed than the others, he found himself unable to make it effective because of an open revolt against several of its clauses. He was therefore obliged to withdraw or amend certain penalties exacted for a failure to marry; to increase the rewards he offered for large families; and to allow a widow, or widower, three years' grace before having to marry again ... When he discovered that bachelors were getting betrothed to little girls, which meant postponing the responsibilities of fatherhood, and that married men were frequently changing their wives, he dealt with evasions of the law by shortening the permissible period between betrothal and marriage, and by limiting the number of lawful divorces (Suetonius, *Augustus* 34; Penguin Classics edition).

21 Cf. W. C. Van Unnik, 'Josephus' Account of the Story of Israel's Sin with Alien Women in the Country of Midian (Num. 25:1ff.)', *Travels in the World of the Old Testament* (ed. M. S. H. G. Heerma Van Voss *et al.*; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974) 241–61.

22 Relevant also is the practice of circumcision (another natural symbol) as a barrier to exogamy. Cf. J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 411–12.

23 Suetonius, *Augustus* 28 (Penguin Classics edition).

24 On the role of marriage laws in the Augustan constitution, see especially S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 7–80; also, the material surveyed in M. R. D'Angelo, 'Roman Imperial Family Values and the Gospel of Mark', *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions* (ed. S. P. Ahearne-Kroll *et al.*; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 59–83.

A number of points are noteworthy here. One is the fact that, in the development of the Roman constitution by Augustus as *Pater Patriae*, sex rules and marriage rules play a prominent part in his work of social engineering. A second point is that Augustus' legislation meets with resistance, a resistance reflecting a diversity of entrenched views and practices. Third, Augustus' marriage policies have a *defensive* purpose: he is seeking to consolidate the social elite through endogamous marriage and the production of children.

When considering Paul's marriage rules, therefore, it is worth considering what light they throw on the kind of constitution – the kind of church polity – that Paul is seeking to put in place, not least in relation to the Corinthians' identity as 'saints'.

6. Marriage Rules in 1 Cor 7.1–40

In 1 Corinthians 5–7, Paul offers instruction on how to avoid the πορνεία threatening the life of the church as a holy society. The issues include: a case of incest in the fellowship (5.1–13), the practice of taking private disputes (probably to do with financial matters arising in a marital context) before public courts (6.1–11), the practice of consorting with prostitutes (6.12–20), and matters relating to marriage (7.1–40). Among the common threads running through all the issues are: first, threats to the oneness of the church posed by members' behaviour, some of which run in the direction of libertinism, while other run in the direction of ascetical rigour; second, *paraenēsis* on the avoidance of πορνεία (cf. 5.1, 9–11, 13; 6.9, 13, 16, 18; 7.2) by means of appropriate disciplines of the body; third, a crisis of authority and church unity provoked by those who are 'puffed up' (cf. 5.2); fourth, the attempt to regulate the boundaries running around and through the church in order to preserve its holiness.

In passing, the language and imagery of 'mixing', inherited by Paul from the scriptural Holiness Code, is worth noting.[25] There is the 'old leaven' that the Corinthians are told to 'cleanse out' (ἐκκαθάρατε, 5.7); and there is the reminder of a previous command 'not to associate (συναναμίγνυσθαι) with sexually immoral persons' (5.9), 'not even to eat with (συνεσθίειν)' them (5.11). This is intensified in what follows in relation to the practice of consorting with prostitutes, especially in the contrast between becoming 'one body' (ἓν σῶμά) with a prostitute in sexual intercourse and becoming 'one spirit' (ἓν πνεῦμα) with Christ (6.16–17), the latter a recognition of the fact that the body of the believer is a 'temple of the Holy Spirit' who resides there (16.19).

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25 Cf. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 53, commenting on Lev 19.19: 'Holiness requires that individuals conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused.'

As the final stage in his instruction on how to avoid πορνεία, Paul turns to marriage rules. It is noteworthy that Paul deals with these matters at length. If we ask why, the answer must be Paul's awareness that, unless the Corinthians can learn stability and good order in their marital relations, the constitutional good order and witness of the church will be undermined (cf. 1 Thess 4.1–8; also 1 Pet 3.1–7). Two previously mentioned traditions will have shaped this awareness: the commonplace of Greco-Roman morality and politics that the health of the city-state depends on the health of its constituent households, and the attention given in the Jewish scriptures and Second Temple traditions to the practical and symbolic significance of marriage and sex rules for living as God's holy people and for marking Israel off from 'the nations'.

But what is making marriage rules an issue in the first place? In general terms, it is the impact of conversion upon every pattern of allegiance, including those of the household.[26] Now the believer's allegiances, whether as married or betrothed, are 'divided' (cf. 7.32–5), and this includes cases where only one marriage-partner has converted, so that a believer is now married to an unbeliever (7.12–16). Interestingly, oneness through the Spirit with Christ is placing other kinds of oneness in question, even the oneness of marriage partners. So questions naturally arise about how to proceed.

That the question in Corinth has taken a particular shape is indicated by the slogan Paul quotes at the outset: 'It is well for a man not to touch a woman' (7.1b). Apparently, some of the husbands in the fellowship are withdrawing from sexual relations with their wives – and, most likely, vice versa. The main issue at stake appears to be the status of the body and the material world in the lives of Spirit-filled believers. Given the overwhelming reality of experiences of Spirit-possession (cf. 4.8; 12.13), the meaning of bodily existence and the status of bodily boundaries have become *points of ambiguity and contention*. In particular, for those who want to display their moral and spiritual superiority – their desire to live now the angelic life (cf. Mark 12.25) – the appeal of the ascetic life and a desire to separate from ties of marriage and children will have been strong. Encouragement in this direction may have come from several traditional sources.[27] In ancient Stoic and Cynic philosophy, the ideal wise man is one who remains single, disciplines his body and practises sexual abstinence. In early Judaism, there are strong ascetic strands as well – witness Philo on the ascetic life-styles of the Essenes and the Therapeutae; witness also the ascetic rigour of the Qumran community. And, of course, there are strong ascetic strands in the

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26 Cf. K. O. Sandnes, *A New Family: Conversion and Ecclesiology in the Early Church with Cross-Cultural Comparisons* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994).

27 Cf. S. C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 23–56; also, W. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004²).

Jesus tradition (cf. Matt 19.10–12) – not to mention the example of Paul himself (1 Cor 9.5).

Against this background, with its potential for conflict in the church, Paul offers practical wisdom in the form of marriage rules. He does so in a quite systematic – indeed, halakhic – way, dealing first with married couples, then widowers and widowed, then the particularly unusual case of 'mixed marriages', and, finally, virgins (παρθένοι). This is not the place to go into detail on what Paul says in each case.[28] However, a few general observations are worth making. First, Paul refuses to allow the practice of any particular faction to be imposed as the norm. Instead, he quotes the factional slogan in order then to qualify the ascetic ideal in a direction accessible to the majority.[29] What is important instead is the identification and affirmation of *acceptable diversity* as the basis for a mature constitution that unites the church, 'the body of Christ' (cf. 6.15; 12.12–27), as one. Second, with rhetorical care (and, no doubt, pastoral sensibility), Paul addresses reciprocally both the men and the women. Within the limits of a cultural patriarchy – not to mention a recognition of Spirit-inspired diversity, even hierarchy – the Pauline constitution has an inclusive, unifying tenor. As he says subsequently, 'For in one Spirit we were *all* baptized into one body … and we were *all* made to drink of one Spirit' (12.13). Third, in the repeated injunctions to 'remain' in the social (including marital) status they had at conversion (7.8, 11, 20, 24, 40), Paul enunciates as a general principle the virtue of stability, along with its corollary, 'peace' (εἰρήνη, 7.15b). Thus, separations of various kinds are to be resisted – no doubt because separations threaten the oneness, the holiness, of the fellowship. Fourth, Paul's rhetorical strategy is significant. He enunciates a principle, then admits of exceptions (cf. 7.9, 11, 15), even, remarkably, when he can appeal to dominical tradition, as in the case of divorce (7.10–11). Paul is a wise spiritual father. He recognises that the constitution of the church will be strengthened as power is dispersed among the members, and responsibility for good practice shared.

7. The Case of Mixed Marriages (1 Cor 7.12–16)

What, then, in the case of a mixed marriage (7.12–16)? Against the backdrop of holiness traditions in Judaism that would urge separation – in order to protect genealogical purity or for fear of idolatry-related moral contagion – Paul's advice appears counter-intuitive. It also appears counter-intuitive in relation to the construction he has placed previously (in 6.12–20) on the impurity deriving from sexual intercourse between a believer, whose body is 'a temple of

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28 Cf. Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, 89–122; also, A.C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 484–606.

29 Cf. H. Chadwick, '"All Things to All Men" (1 Cor IX.22)', *NTS* 1 (1954–5) 261–75.

the Holy Spirit', and a prostitute. Nevertheless, addressing in reciprocal fashion both the believing 'brother' and the believing 'sister', Paul's advice is *not* to divorce: μὴ ἀφιέτω (7.12, 13). This is consistent with his prior command to married believers, based on dominical tradition, not to divorce (7.10–11). Paul's concern for the oneness of the church as the body of Christ *spills over* into a concern for the oneness of marriage partners. Why? Because *oneness is a sign and sustainer of holiness.* Related to Paul's apocalyptic theology as a whole,[30] it is a witness *against* the chaos of the creation (along with its social manifestation in factionalism) that is passing away, and a witness *for* the oneness of the new creation inaugurated by Christ, realised through the Spirit, dramatised in baptism (cf. 12.13), and worked out in a common life.

Particularly striking in the case of a mixed marriage is the warrant Paul gives for not divorcing: 'For the unbelieving husband is made holy (ἡγίασται) through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy (ἡγίασται) through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean (ἀκάθαρτα), but as it is, they are holy (ἅγια)' (7.14). Remarkable here is the intrusion and concentration of holiness language. Remarkable also is the fact that Paul makes the holiness of *the children* – the offspring of the marriage in question – the presupposition of his argument.[31] By way of explanation, I offer the following observations.

First, it is likely that holiness language intrudes here because *it is precisely the interpretation of holiness that is being contested.* As noted earlier, differences over the conception and practice of holiness, worked out in terms of purity rules of association and separation, distinguished one faction from another in early Judaism.[32] In this context, the practice of mixed marriage has special symbolic potency, whether in relation to marriage practices within Judaism or between Jews and Gentiles. Given the evidence of an ascetic interpretation of holiness in Corinth, what Paul appears to be engaging with is (what we may call) a rigorous, probably Jewish-Christian, 'purity party' advocating separation from any potential or actual source of impurity or defilement.[33] This includes separation from sexual intercourse – hence the slogan, 'It is well for a man not to touch a woman' (7.1b).

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30 Cf. J. L. Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997) 89–110.

31 I say 'remarkable' partly in light of Paul's notable disinterest in real (as opposed to metaphorical) children elsewhere.

32 On similar divergences distinguishing one philosophical school from another, see Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 141–4.

33 Interestingly, a representation of the kind of conception of holiness Paul is combatting comes in a fragment contained in 2 Cor 6.14–7.1. Expressing a sectarian, almost Qumran-style ethic, we find here a classic example of holiness as avoidance and separation, with idolatry and 'every defilement of body and spirit' key symbolic foci. For a recent discussion, see V. Rabens, 'Paul's Rhetoric of Demarcation: Separation from "Unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1) in the Corinthian Conflict', *Theologizing in the Corinthian Conflict: Studies in the Exegesis and Theology of 2 Corinthians* (ed. R. Bieringer, M. M. S. Ibita, D. A. Kurek-Chomycz and T. A. Vollmer; Leuven: Peeters, 2012).

It also appears to include marital separation in the form of divorce (cf. 7.10–11). Needless to say then, in the case of a believer married to an unbeliever, the logic of the purity party is that such a relation is necessarily defiling, with divorce the proper and justifiable course of action.

Second, Paul's response with regard to mixed marriages should be seen as an attempt to moderate the rigour of the purity party by offering a wisdom directed not towards separation, but towards oneness, *a oneness of difference based on consent* and on what makes for peace. Interestingly, over against the presumed expectation of the purity party, it is the consent of the *unbelieving* spouse that is to be decisive. Paul has said earlier that he does not mean the Corinthian believers to go 'out of the world' (5.10), and the way he practises that principle here is to take with utter seriousness the giving or withholding of consent by the unbeliever, the one who still belongs to the world. So, if the unbeliever consents to live with the believing spouse, the believing spouse should not separate, with the implication either that the unbelieving spouse is not a source of impurity or that purity concerns have become otiose. But if the unbelieving spouse separates, 'let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound [literally, 'is not enslaved', δεδούλωται]' (7.15). There is a significant quality of pragmatism and flexibility evident here (cf. 9.19–23), in contrast, perhaps, to the stance of Paul's implied interlocutors.

Third, to make his point, and to address the holiness concerns of the rigorists, Paul engages in holiness discourse also. Illuminating at this point is a study by Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, which demonstrates the likely background of Paul's advice in Jewish marriage halakhot.[34] She argues that what Paul is doing is delivering an halakhic interpretation of the dominical prohibition of divorce (cf. 7.10) for the case of a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. In line with the dominical prohibition (cf. Mark 10.2–9), Paul rules against separation. The defence he offers is an example of the principle he enunciates subsequently, in 9.20b: 'To those under the law I became as one under the law'. That is to say, Paul occupies the same halakhic territory as those of the purity party who argue for separation, but does so in order to advise differently. Specifically, Paul uses holiness terminology reminiscent of halakhot that refer to the act of betrothal as one of 'sanctification' (as an indicator that a marriage is licit), and applies this to the case of mixed marriage.[35] Gillihan concludes:

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34 Y. M. Gillihan, 'Jewish Laws on Illicit Marriage, the Defilement of Offspring, and the Holiness of the Temple: A New Halakic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14', *JBL* 121 (2002) 711–44. Also of interest, for his account of the (re)interpretation of 1 Cor 7.14 in the Church Fathers, is S. J. D. Cohen, 'From Permission to Prohibition: Paul and the Early Church on Mixed Marriage', *Paul's Jewish Matrix* (ed. T. G. Casey and J. Taylor; Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011) 259–92.

35 Gillihan, 'Jewish Laws', 717–18 draws particular attention to the linguistic parallel offered by *m.Qidd.* 2.1.

The rabbis assumed that the act of betrothal, or 'sanctification,' implied the licitness of the marital union. This is precisely what Paul implies in 1 Cor 7:14 – the marital union is licit because the unbelieving spouse is 'sanctified' … We might say that the Pharisaic/rabbinic betrothal idiom has come under the influence of the commandment of the Lord against divorce, so that the licitness of marriage is now judged on the basis of the indissolubility of the marriage bond (by the believer) rather than on the basis of the premarital status of each spouse.[36]

Of course, the Pauline halakha is novel, not only in its application to couples *already married*, but also in its appropriation for a *mixed* community that includes believers married to unbelievers. Its intention is to provide a development of the Jesus tradition in the direction of marital solidarity, even in the case of mixed marriages, a solidarity which itself is able to function, I would suggest, as a 'natural symbol' of the boundary-transcending oneness of the church. What this implies further is a conception of holiness with potential for social innovation. Instead of holiness as an ideology and practice of defence, it is holiness as an ideology and practice of *incorporation*.

Gillihan is illuminating also in relation to the logic of Paul's argument from the holiness of the offspring of a mixed marriage. According to Paul, the unbelieving partner *must* be sanctified in some way[37] by the believing partner: 'Otherwise, your children would be unclean (ἀκάθαρτα), but as it is, they are holy (νῦν δὲ ἅγιά ἐστιν)' (7.14b). According to Gillihan the relevant background is constituted by Jewish tradition regarding the defiling consequences for land and temple of offspring (*mamzerim*) issuing from illicit marriage, tradition intended defensively to encourage marital discipline and the practice of licit marriage. From the conviction – apparently shared with his Corinthian interlocutors – that the children of mixed marriage parentage who participate in the Christian community (the new 'temple') are holy, and not a source of pollution, Paul can argue *a fortiori* that mixed marriages are licit, that the believing spouse does indeed sanctify the unbelieving spouse, and therefore that the believing spouse has no grounds in purity halakhot to separate:

Paul proves that believer-unbeliever marriages were licit by pointing out that their children are not *mamzerim*, impure offspring of illegal marriage, but holy. The children of such intermarriages were allowed into the holy space of the temple; that is, they were allowed to participate fully in the religious life of the community … If their parents' marriage were not licit, or as Paul and the rabbis would have put it, if the unbelieving spouse were not 'sanctified,'

36 Gillihan, 'Jewish Laws', 718–19.
37 I say 'in some way' because the unbeliever *remains* an unbeliever. In other words, the terminology of sanctification has a particular – halakhic, rather than soteriological – sense here, which is consonant with the fact that the agent of sanctification is human (the believing spouse), not divine.

then the impurity of the children would have excluded them from the 'temple.' With this proof Paul points to the Corinthians' practice of including the children in the life of the community, aiming to persuade them by presenting their own actions as confirmation that they already knew and acted in accordance with the truth that he proclaimed.[38]

Note in general that, instead of drawing a purity line *between* believing spouse and unbelieving spouse, he draws a line *around* them. Indeed, the line is drawn around the parents and their children. The oneness of the household is important for Paul, presumably as a natural symbol of the oneness-in-holiness of the church.

Finally, we note that in 7.16 Paul moves beyond holiness language to the language of eschatological salvation: 'Wife, for all you know, you might save (σώσεις) your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save (σώσεις) your wife.' A little later, in a rhetorically significant 'digression' in the middle of his treatment of εἰδωλόθυτα, Paul will say, concerning his own practice, 'I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means *save* (σώσω) some' (9.22). The language of eschatologically oriented personal agency in the drama of salvation is striking. It is that kind of personal agency, oriented towards the good of the other – including the possibility of the spiritual oneness of the marriage partners – that Paul is encouraging in the believing spouse.

8. Conclusion

Holiness or sanctification in 1 Corinthians is a *contested* matter. Given the history of holiness in Israel and in the sectarian Judaism of the Second Temple period, that is unsurprising. On a wider front, the crucial issue, it seems to me, is *the defining source* of which Pauline holiness is a manifestation and an interpretation. For Paul, that source, unequivocally, is Christ crucified as the eschatological revelation of the foolish wisdom of God bringing a new creation into being: 'He [God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness *and sanctification* (καὶ ἁγιασμὸς) and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord"' (1.30–1).

What Paul says about how holiness is to find expression in constitutional matters like marriage rules, food rules and the practice of the group when they assemble as church are all expressions, in one way or another, of that basic eschatological orientation and christological allegiance. At some points, holiness is a matter of separation. At many more points, it is a matter of new-found, boundary-transcending oneness-in-multiplicity. But whether in practices of separation, or in practices of integration, or even in practices in the grey area along the lines of demarcation, the 'norming norm' for Paul is the confession of the holy oneness of God, the lordship of Christ, and freedom in the Spirit.

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38 Gillihan, 'Jewish Laws', 730.