R Zimmermann

MARRIAGE, SEXUALITY, AND HOLINESS: ASPECTS OF MARITAL ETHICS IN THE *CORPUS PAULINUM*[1]

ABSTRACT

A fundamental change in the understanding of marriage becomes apparent in the first century A.D., described by M. Foucault as the transition from a "matrimonial" to a "conjugal" marital concept. While early Christianity participated in this development, it also influenced it at decisive points and developed its own marital ethics. Through a consideration of philosophical (Musonius, Plutarch) and early Judaic (esp. Qumran, *Jubilees*) texts, this article outlines the marital concepts existing in the NT environment. In this context, the reciprocal community and the duration of the marital relationship are emphasized while sexuality remains wholly limited to reproduction. The core of the article offers a concrete analysis of texts from the *Corpus Paulinum* (1Cor 5-7; 1Thess 4:1-5; Eph 5:21-33), in which one can recognize, upon the backdrop of a traditional-hierarchical classification of man and woman, an equal and holistic relationship of the marital partners. Simultaneously – and here the Pauline texts extend beyond the borders of their environment – sexual intercourse is valued as an important component of the relationship between husband and wife. Here, the relationship of marriage, including the physical union of the marital partners, is theologically substantiated, and the frequently occurring semantics of "holiness" clearly plays a central role in the context of the marital texts. In the theologically substantiated union of the sexes one can recognize not only traditional, but especially Judaic forms of speech, created through the close interweaving of relationships between the sexes and the relationship with God. In addition, further norms that regulate early Christianity, such as the condemnation of adultery or the prohibition of divorce, become understandable in new ways.

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Ruben Zimmermann, Johannes Gutenberg-University of Mainz, Germany; Research associate, University of Pretoria, South Africa. E-mail: ruben.zimmermann@uni-mainz.de

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1. INTRODUCTION

> In today's media culture, we are surrounded by erotic innuendo; almost all sexual taboos have been abandoned. Are we living in a society uninhibitedly devoted to the enjoyment of sensual desire? Surprisingly, recent studies have revealed exactly the opposite. For most Germans, whether young or old, sex does not merely mean lust; instead it fulfills a profound yearning – a yearning for the highest degree of human intimacy (*GEO* 2007:27).

These statements come from a cover article in the German *GEO* magazine, and it is not the only place where such a perspective has been noted. Recent scientific studies on late- or post-modern sexuality, such as the 2006 study on youth sexuality, confirm the change in trend indicated here (see also Schmidt & Strauß 2002). The current generation of youth takes this hard-won sexual freedom in surprising ways. Some are even rediscovering the value of sexual asceticism, for example, in the asexual movement, which began in the USA and has gained a substantial membership in Germany (Asexuality: nd); and those young people who are in principle in favor of sexual activity are no longer primarily interested only in enjoying the moment – one night stands are out.[2] Lasting, permanent, and holistic relationships are seen as the ideal location for living out one's sexuality. Does this make marriage – once again or for the first time – the place in which sexual desire finds its true fulfillment? On the other hand, however, does the institutionalization of eroticism not inhibit desire? Does the daily routine, for example, in the raising of children, not inevitably take the magic out of sexuality and reduce it to a mere function? What can an investigation of antiquity contribute to this issue? How can the texts of early Christianity inspire us when Christianity is principally regarded, due to its origins, as being hostile to lust, bodily desire, and physicality? This article offers an unusual look at the perception and ethical evaluation of sexuality in the texts of the Apostle Paul and his school.

2. MARRIAGE, SEXUALITY AND HOLINESS – APPROACHES AND DEPARTURES

The terms "marriage", "sexuality" and "holiness" which are brought together here must first be dealt with hermeneutically in order for their later use to be better understood.

2 See, for example the statement of the lead singer of the popular youth pop band Tokio Hotel, Bill Kaulitz (17): "I'm not into it just for the moment and I don't like one nights stands" (2007).

2.1 Sexuality

A first look at "sexuality" brings only problems to light. The phenomenon is not problematic in a moral sense. Instead, the difficulties lie in the term itself and its use. The term, developed from the late Latin word *sexualis*, is a belated invention. In antiquity, there was no term for what we call "sexuality."[3] Can we then, with regard to the present subject, justifiably speak of "sexuality"?

Perhaps a few contemporary definitions would help to isolate the phenomenon. What do we mean by "sexuality"?

> Biologically, sexuality is defined as an aggregate of characteristics that differentiates between the two types or parts of the organism which reproduce by means of the fusion of gametes and which thus also create a connection of genetic material from two different sources. Psychologically, sexuality is the behavior directly associated with the meeting of the two genders – and in some species with copulation – which can lead to fertilization (Broadhurst 1980:3.2046).

> Sexuality that grows [out of the dimorphism of the genders is] an aspect of humanity that influences life, experience and cohabitation from conception until death. Thus, aspects of the body, the soul, culture and society are symbolized in sexuality. The shape that it takes is a distinctive characteristic of every person (Wille 2000:326).

In contemporary protestant theology, sexuality is regarded both as an individual expression of the unity and integrity of the human being's body and soul and, on a social level, in its dimension of defining relationships with other people.[4] Against this backdrop, we cannot reduce it morally to sin or direct it functionally toward reproduction. However, the further we push the term, the more its specific contents elude us. Broad definitions consider not only the procreative function but also sexuality's communicative, compensatory, desire-creating functions. Freud even considered the "joyful suckling" of a newborn to be a sexual act. But in such a case, what is sexual and what is only compensation for or sublimation of the sexual?

As Sigusch states, this demonstrates the "difficulty, maybe even the impossibility, of dealing with sexuality lexically. Anyone who does this must define that which is indefinable, must create unity where there are only contradictions, must appeal to our rationality, which puts up opposition" (Sigusch 1984:46).

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3 See also Tiedemann (2005:2.21): "The ancient world knows no term that corresponds to the modern term sexuality." See Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990.

4 See Banner and Gerber 2000; Körtner 2004; Schwarke 2008.

Since the late works of the French philosopher, Michel Foucault (Foucault 1997-1998), it has scarcely been possible to call into question the discursiveness of the term sexuality. Nevertheless, within the essentialism-constructivism controversy (see Lautmann 1992 and Tiedemann 1998) there was objection to a purely cultural construction of "sexual identity". Therefore, if the terminological usage in contemporary discourse is ambiguous, the usage of the term with regard to ancient phenomena is even more problematic. Nevertheless, this need not necessarily lead to the creation of taboos. Even if the transferal of terminology from contemporary discourse onto ancient phenomena is problematic, it does not mean that we cannot profit from the attempt. Therefore, I would like to retain, heuristically, the short hand, that comes with the term sexuality in order to describe the relationship between the sexes. I will limit myself to "heterosexuality", that is the sexual relationship between a man and a woman. Thus, when I speak in this paper about "sexuality" in ancient Christianity or in ancient philosophy, the fundamentally problematic nature of using this terminology must be kept in mind.

2.2 Marriage and sexuality

The combination of sexuality and marriage in my title marks a further problem. In antiquity, it was in no way to be taken for granted that sexuality was a part of marriage. The rhetorician Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.) is said to have written:

Τὰς μεν γὰρ ἑταίρας ἡδονῆς ἕνεκ ἔχομεν,	"For we have hetaerae for desire,
τὰς δὲ παλλακὰς τῆς καθ ἡμέραν θεραπείας τοῦ σώματός	concubines for the daily care of our bodies,
Τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας τοῦ παιδοποιεῖσθαι γνησίως καὶ τῶν ἔνδον φύλακα πιστὴν ἔχειν.	(and) wives to beget legitimate children and to loyally guard our families."

(Ps-)Demosthenes, *Adversus Neaeram,* 122

Thus, a man maintains three relationships with women: hetaerae to satisfy sexual desire, concubines to take care of personal hygiene, and wives for the legitimate "production of children". Obviously, carnal desire, the lust-based joining together of the sexes, had, on the surface, very little to do with the institutionally and contractually regulated cohabitation of men and women in

marriage. Marriage was a utilitarian institution that served to maintain the clan or the nation through procreation. Sexual contact within marriage, therefore, was primarily or exclusively for the purpose of reproduction, as has been unanimously confirmed by many ancient authors.

2.3 Sexuality and holiness

Bringing together sexuality and holiness, however, is even more problematic than combining sexuality and marriage. Sexuality and holiness clearly oppose each other in many texts in the Hebrew Bible and in early Judaism. God is "holy" (see Lev 11:44-45 and 1Sam 6:2; Zwickel 2008) while sexuality is attributed to worldly creatures. For this reason, lists of sexual taboos were included in the Holiness Code. Man's God-given holiness was endangered by sexual misdeeds.[5] According to the Jewish Book of Jubilees a couple should refrain from sexual intercourse in sacred space (as the garden of Eden Jub 3:5.12.34) or sacred time (as the Sabbath Jub 50:8).[6]

In order to join sexuality and holiness in a relationship with each other, one must first assume a radical opposition between the two. Thus, it is not surprising that, based on biblical texts, sexuality was viewed as the anti-godly, the unhallowed, and even the highest sin. The sacredness of God and the sinfulness of sexuality mutually exclude each other. Using the terminology of love, there is presumed to be a principle contradiction between *eros* and *agape*, between the love of God and the desire of man, and between sexuality and religiosity (see Nygren 1954).

The fateful history of this separation between holiness and sexuality or eroticism and mysticism is often traced back to biblical origins because, it is argued, the term ἐρᾶν/ἐρᾶσθαι or ἔρως is noticeably avoided in biblical writings while ἀγάπη or ἀγαπᾶν has become the dominant term for love. Exactly 11 lines were devoted to the NT in a 35-page *TRE* article on the topic of "sexuality" (see Banner & Gerber 2000:196). However, I will challenge this assumption using observations drawn from several NT texts. I will sound out the interactions between marriage, sexuality, and holiness using, in particular, the texts of Paul. However, I must first provide some explanations about the concept of marriage in the NT environment.

5 See Lev 20. vv. 7 and 26 are the framework for the call to holiness; vv. 8-25 describe sexual misdeeds and their punishments.

6 On the other hand Jubilees highlights sexual union as a core element in the creation story, see in details Loader 2007: 236-45.

3. MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY AND EARLY JUDAISM

3.1 The concept of marriage in Greco-Roman texts – From domination to community[7]

In classical antiquity, the marital relationship can be classified as a relationship of domination. Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (4th century B.C.) is an early literary witness to this relationship. In a dialogue between Socrates and Critobulus, the author describes the ideal marriage between the weak and fearful woman (Aspasia) and the strong and learned man (Ichomachos). A similar work has been passed down in the name of Aristotle (= Ps-Aristotle) in which the relationship between man and woman is explicitly compared to the ruling form of the monarchy (μοναρχία) and nature, given by god, is considered to be the basis for the necessary separation of roles (Ps-Aristotle *Oec.* 1.43a.1-4[8]).

> Thus the nature of every individual, of man and woman, and of the community has been created by the deities. (Their natures) can be differentiated from one another by the fact that their abilities do not in all cases serve the same (purpose). Instead they sometimes serve contradictory (purposes) even when they strive for (a common end). For (the deities) created one stronger and the other weaker so that one, because of fear, will be more careful and the other, based on courage, will be more willing to defend and so that one will take care of matters outside and the other will take care of matters in the house. Regarding work, (the deities) made one capable of a sedentary way of life and too weak for outside activity whereas the other is unsuitable for quiet activity but has the strength for activity involving movement. (Ps-Aristotle *Oec.* 1.43b.26-44a.5)

Both works were very popular in Hellenistic-Roman times, as is witnessed by the translation of Xenophon's work into Latin (see Cicero, O*ff.* 2.87 and Column. XII praef. 7), by polemic tractates (e.g. by Philodemus, 1st century B.C.), and above all by numerous works with the title περὶ οἰκονομίας.[9] The basic assumptions of this "*Oeconomicus* literature" have been modified only slightly since Xenophon. The marital relationship is described as a judgmental role play in which the woman is assigned to the household tasks (food

7 See for details Zimmermann 2001:338-341.

8 Philodem of Gadara (1st century B.C.), who cites from the work, names Theoprast, the successor to Aristotle, as the author. This is, however, disputed. See, on the text, Victor 1983:87-94.

9 We should name here above all the economic works of the Neo-Pythagoreans Bryson and Callicratidas (around the birth of Christ) as well as of the stoic Hierocles (2nd century A.D.).

preparation, child raising, etc.) and is forbidden to be independently attractive (e.g., by wearing jewelry). The man, on the other hand, is assigned to the public tasks that demand responsibility and also determine the relationship between husband and wife. The woman should be subordinate to the man, while the man is called upon to behave modestly and justly.[10] Corresponding to this hierarchical relationship, the husband is characterized as the κύριος of the woman. Marriage is defined here as a utilitarian institution, the goal of which is to ensure the production of offspring, which, as already stated by Plato in the *Politeia* (e.g., *Politeia* 423 e 7; 449 d 2f.), in the end served the interests of the *polis* or the general public.

This model of marriage was broken down around the onset of the first century C.E. Increasing numbers of witnesses can be found at this time redefining the basic relationship between husband and wife and describing this relationship as a personal relationship.[11] M. Foucault characterized this shift as the change from a "matrimonial" to a "conjugal" marital concept and described the man-woman relationship as "*dual* in its form, *universal* in its value and *specific* in its intensity".[12]

This shift from a hierarchical to a symmetrical relationship can be seen, for example, in the practices of the marriage ceremony. The marriage ritual (ἔκδοσις) of classical times that can better be described as "a change in ownership" gave way to an egalitarian norm of marriage, as can be seen in the consensus contracts (συγχώρησις) (see Katzoff 1995). In Roman law there was, thus, a shift from the *manus* marriage to a free, more equitable form of marriage (*sine in manum conventione*). This trend is confirmed by an equitable divorce practice in Hellenism (see Kleinschmidt 1998: 175-182).

Above all, we can see a change within the philosophical foundations of marriage. Marriage came to be described more often as a *pedagogical challenge* in which the man educates a cultured partner. This is demonstrated in the exchange of letters between Pliny the Younger and his third wife Calpurnia.[13] Additionally, in his *Coniugalia praecepta*, Plutarch (approx. 45-120 A.D.) clearly relativized the relationship of domination:

10 See Foucault (1997-1998: 2.211-33) with reference to the *Oeconomicus* of Ps-Aristotle, Plato's *Nomoi* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

11 Important authors in this regard are Antipater of Tarsos (approx. 140 B.C.) Musonius Rufus (30-100 A.D.), Plutarch of Chaironeia (approx. 45-120 A.D.), Hierocles (approx. 150 A.D).

12 See Foucault 1997-1998: 3.197; see a critical view on Foucault by Skinner 2005: 155.

13 In his letters, Pliny emphasizes the marital togetherness with his third wife, Calpurnia (marriage shortly after 100 A.C.). The letters reveal the emotional ties (see the love letter *Ep.* 7.5), the wife's interest for the activities of her husband (*Ep.* 4.19.2-4), and the moral education. Correspondingly, Calpurnia writes: "who has

> A man must not rule over the woman like an owner over his possessions (ὡς δεσπότην κτήματος) but like the soul over the body (ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ψυχὴν σώματος) by feeling with it and growing together in benevolence with it." (*Conjug. prae.* 33, Plutarch, *Mor.* 142.3; see Martano and Tirelli 1990:84)

Although, at the core, Plutarch retains the established hierarchical structure (see Patterson 1992:4722), he clearly increases the value of the wife[14] and considers the marital ideal to be a harmonic community (see Plutarch Mor. 138c-d) that he describes in *Conjug. prae*. 34 as κρᾶσις (Plutarch, *Mor.* 142-43), or, in the sense of the stoic physics, as "complete fusion." According to Plutarch, love brings the man and woman in marriage into a new and indivisible unit.[15] The stoic philosopher, Musonius Rufus (30-100 A.D.), is the clearest representative of a common marital ideal based on a personal relationship.[16] In the *Reliquiae*, he writes:

> In marriage, however, there must be close togetherness in every respect as well as mutual concern between man and woman when they are healthy and when they are sick and in every life situation.… When this relationship of mutual loyalty is perfect and both can achieve this by living together and competing to surpass each other's love – such a marriage is how marriage should be and is a model for others. For such a relationship is truly beautiful (Nickel 1994:483-485).

The marital relationship between husband and wife is described above as "a relationship of mutual loyalty", as "community" which is defined by mutual caring. According to these texts, both partners are obligated to be equally loyal (see Plutarch *Mor.* 144a-b; 767e; *et al.*). Adultery and sexual relationships with slaves, prostitutes and young boys, which were tolerated or even respected in earlier times, are now devalued as immoral. The evidence of Musonius, Epictetus, or Dio Chrysostom (approx. 40-122 A.D.) clearly demonstrates this change.[17]

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seen nothing but purity and moral behavior in your company" (*nihil ... viderit nisi sanctum honestumque*), *Ep*. 4.19.6. See Stahlmann 1997:30-48.

14 Therefore, in *Mor.* 242f-243a he can attribute the same virtues (ἀρεταί) to husband and wife.

15 Plutarch describes three types of marriage in *Coniugalia praecepta* 34 (142e-143a): 1. the marriage of appetite; 2. the marriage of utility; 3. the marriage of love. See Martano and Tirelli 1990 and Foucault 1997-1998:3.212-41.

16 See on the sexual morality of Musonius and other philosophers Malherbe 2000:230, 237-238; Malherbe 2007; Skinner 2005.

17 Musonius, for example, is explicitly opposed to sexual intercourse between a master and a slave, see Musonius *Reliquiae or.* 12. His student Epictetus polemicizes against adultery committed by a married man as an offense against the commandment of love in *Diatr.* 2.4.2-3; see also Foucault 1997-1998:3.222-38;

3.2 Marriage in Judaism: From polygyny to monogamous marriage

Let us now look at the Jewish concept of marriage. In OT Judaism, marriage was strictly regulated by contract and served the orderly reproduction and economic protection of women and children (see also Otto 1999:1073). Marriage was primarily a family issue; the relationship between individual partners was of very little importance (see Sutter-Rehmann 2009). The patriarchal structure of marriage can be clearly recognized in the family laws in Deuteronomy (Deut 21:15-21; 22:13-29; 24:1-4; 25:5-10) as well as in the historical narration (Gen 3:16; Lev 27:1-7; *et al.*). The meaningful characterization of the husband as *baᶜal ʻišāh* shows that the man was the "master of the wife," who was correspondingly called *bᵉᶜûlat baᶜal* or literally "the one who is subordinated to the force of the master" (Otto 1999:1071).

Sexual activity between marital partners explicitly served the reproduction of the species, as is stated in Gen 1:28 and, according to the canonical chronology, was the first commandment for humanity. The extent to which reproduction or the continuation of the genealogical line defined the meaning of marriage is also revealed by institutions such as levirate marriage (Deut 25:2-19; Gen 38; Ruth 4) or polygyny. In principle, marriage with several women was not permitted but served only to provide for descendants or to demonstrate the power of kings. In ancient Babylonian law, polygyny was permitted primarily if a man was married to a priestess who was obligated to remain childless. The OT law also tied polygyny to the purpose of providing for descendants (Gen 16:1-16; 30:1-6; 1 Sam 1:2). In the same way that ancient Babylonian marital law only recognized marriages with a maximum of two women (CH §144), the Jewish tradition provides evidence primarily of bigyny (see Deut 21, 15-17). The older texts also report impartially on extramarital relationships between men and prostitutes. The scouts at Jericho stopped to visit the prostitute Rahab (Josh 2:1), and the judge Samson went to Gaza to visit a prostitute (Judg 16:1). In the Judah narration, it is not relations with a prostitute that are problematic (Gen 38:15-18) but instead the upholding of the obligation to the levirate.[18]

The legal or financial regulations as well as the young age of the marital partners and the heteronomous choice of partners at first suggest a purely functional concept of marriage, whether it be for reproduction, for keeping the family or families together, or even for political reasons. Only later does

In *Or. 7,* Dio Chrysostom describes the "unnatural" city life and denounces urban prostitution, adultery and pederasty as moral errors (*Or. 7,* 134-136, 149). See also Winkler 1997:39-51.

18 It is, however, explicitly emphasized that Judah's wife had already died, see Gen 38:12.

the relationship aspect come into play and, in such cases, the relationship of loyalty is particularly emphasized (Prov 12:4; 18:22; 19:14; 31:10-31; Sir 26:1-4, 13-16).

In early Judaism, however, there was the tendency to completely prohibit simultaneous or even successive polygamy (after divorce or death) and instead to call for monogamous marriage, as is formulated paradigmatically in CD IV, 20b-V2a:

> They were trapped in fornication in two ways: to take two women (21) in their life; but the basis of creation is (Gen 1:27): *he created them as a man and a woman*; (V 1) and they went into the ark, they went two by two into the ark (Gen 7:9, 15); and it is written about princes (Deut 17:17): (2) *and he should not keep many women*.

This verse, upon which H. Stegemann (1996:267–274) based the foundation of the marital practice of the Essenes (see also Loader 2009), combines quotes from Gen 1:27 and Gen 7:9 as well as Deut 17:17 to polemicize against simultaneous and probably also successive polygamy and to emphasize the fact that according to creation one man and one woman belong together for their entire lives. The fact that creation provided for monogamous partnership can be viewed as the prerequisite for the ancient Christian marital concept as is seen in Jesus' radical prohibition of divorce and in particular in his explanation thereof in Mark 10:1-9par., which draws on Gen 1:27 with Gen 2:24, or in the Pauline tradition (1 Cor 7:10-11; see the controversy in 1 Timothy).

In his paradigmatic representation of the relationship between Abraham and Sarah (*Abr.* 245f, *et al.*), Philo of Alexandria revealed his view of the partnership between husband and wife as a holistic community. Going beyond a relationship between marital partners that is based on economics and reproduction, Philo often speaks of harmony and the uniting of souls (*Mos.* 1.7: *QG* 2.26; 3.21; see Mayer 1987:66-67). Even though, in *Spec.* 3.34-35, Philo allows for the upholding of a marriage with a woman who cannot bear children while the husband was simultaneously obliged to marry an additional wife in order, after years of barrenness, to fulfill the commandment to reproduce, this still reflects the personal relationship as the basis for the marital community.

In rabbinical Judaism, the relationship of the marital partners was also emphasized. Examples of this are the highly praised marriage of Akiba and Rahel in the Talmud as well as the didactic poem of Pseudo-Phocylides.[19]

19 "Love your wife, for what is better and more pleasant than a wife who is friendly to her husband until old age and a man to his wife, without beginning to fight (*Ps-Phok* 195-197); cited by Mayer, 1987:68. On marital love in the Talmud, see also M. L. Satlow One Who Loves His Wife Like Herself'. Love in Rabbinic Marriage,

3.3 Marriage without sexuality

The philosophical and early Judaic texts already mentioned demonstrate a clear shift in the understanding of marriage. The relationship aspect began to gain more and more importance. However, it is striking that the same authors who emphasized loyalty and the holism of the relationship also strictly regimented sexuality or even banned it from marriage. Musonius considered marital sex to be "immoral" and "unethical" if it originated out of desire rather than serving the purpose of reproduction:

> XII: People who are not lascivious may consider sexual relations in marriage to be moral only if such relations are meant for the conceiving of children because this is according to the law. Relations that serve only pleasure are immoral and unethical even if they take place within marriage. (τὰ δέ γε ἡδονὴν θηρώμενα ψιλὴν ἄδικα καὶ παράνομά κἂν ἐν γάμῳ ᾖ) (Nickel 1994:478-479)
>
> XIII A (frg): For those who will marry and those who are married must come together for the purpose of living with each other and conceiving children together and they have all things in common …. As they also make the bond of matrimony with the desire to have children (Nickel 1994:482-485).

In addition, adultery and other extramarital sex were both problematic. The former violated the honor of the other man and his "hope of having legitimate children" and the latter was a sin against one's own body. Anyone who had sexual relations with a slave, prostitute, or unmarried woman, Musonius stated, "may not wrong other people" but he sinned against himself for he showed himself to be someone who did not have his desires under control. For Musonius, the practice of having sex with other women demonstrated a lack of self control and a lack of control of one's emotions, which were important virtues for the stoic philosophers.

In early Judaism, sexuality was also subjected to strict rules. In a post-exilic revision of the Pentateuch, an entire catalogue of sexual taboos was added in Lev 18 to the Holiness Code. In this addition, purity or holiness as well as the endangering of the community, for example through incest, play an important role. Sexual relations made people impure and this was true for sexuality in marriage as well. In Lev 15:18 we read: "This applies also to the woman with whom a man has had intercourse; they shall both bathe themselves in water and remain unclean till evening." This verse was adopted

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JJS 49 (1998):67-86. See also his nuanced summary: "Rabbinic literature barely exhibits, and certainly does not promote, a marital sentimental ideal." But the rabbis do believe that ἔρως (...) has a vital place in marriage" (ibid., 85).

in the temple scroll 11Q19 (= temple scroll I), 45.10-12 and concretely applied to the holy city, Jerusalem:

> They should not come to my sanctuary blemished by their uncleanliness and make it impure. (11) And no man should come when he has intercourse with a woman (Lev 15:18) to the entire sacred city (12) to which I give my name and that for three days.

The *Damascus Document*, CD XII 1-2 (= 4Q271 Frg. 3), deals with the problem of sexual intercourse in Jerusalem similarly (see Loader 2009: 376-83):

> No one shall sleep with a woman in the sacred city in order to make the holy city impure with their "sexual" impurity (CD XII,1)

According to the *Damascus Document* sexual intercourse should not take place on the Sabbath as a sacred time (CD 11.5; possible 12:4; see also 4Q251; Jub 50:8).[20]

Finally we should refer to several statements from the Hellenistic-Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria. In his work *De specialibus legibus,* Philo criticized men "who in their passion for lascivious relations sleep not with strange women but with their own wives" (*Spec.* 3.9; also 3.34-36). Philo also considered the production of children to be the only legitimate purpose of marital sexual relations (*Abr.* 137; *Ios.* 43; *Cher.* 49-50; *Mos.* 1.28; *Spec.* 3.34–36.113; see Loader 2004).

3.4 Interim summary

In pagan philosophical discussion as well as in Judaic texts, whether at Qumran or in Philo of Alexandria, there is an unusual tension that is difficult for us to understand. On the one hand, the relationship aspect of the marriage has increased in importance, allowing the woman's value to increase and for her to be considered to be the exclusive partner in an emotional community. On the other hand, there is a devaluation and strict regimentation of sexuality that reaches ascetic tendencies. Sexuality is limited to marriage but within marriage it is tied to reproduction.

The reasons for these limitations can be found only within the larger societal context. Gerd Theißen has put forward the bold thesis that

20 See Loader 2009: 376-83; Loader 2007: 236-45.

> the emotional intensification of the love relationship in marriage and effective family planning … were only possible through the strict reduction and control of sexuality (Theißen 1997:27).

Because extramarital sexual relations with slaves, prostitutes or homosexual partners "were a functional (if not also an intentional) means of birth control", other mechanisms of control had to take effect when such relationships were prohibited.

> The new marital ideal could only be that of one marriage with strongly ascetic elements, bordering on partnerships with emotional commitment but without sexual unification (Theißen 1997:27).

However, such a context requires the desire for conscious and rationally motivated birth control and is, in my opinion, improbable when one considers the importance of offspring.

Instead a different context appears plausible to me. Frequent sexual relations conflict directly with the principle of the equality of the marital partners. Here we must think of the ancient sexual apparatus in which sexuality was placed in the hierarchical categories of active-passive, strong-weak, male-female, etc. (Tiedemann 2005:21). According to this arrangement of sexual codes, one can conclude that when marital partners engaged in sexual relations, the woman generally had to take on the passive and subordinate role. In this way, however, the ideal of equality was undermined and eroded.

4. MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL ETHICS IN TEXTS FROM THE *CORPUS PAULINUM*

Let us now turn to some marital texts from the NT in which I will limit myself to the texts of Paul.[21] I do not want to trace a detailed development diachronically, but rather to systematically look at several fundamental questions. I will begin with a text from the Deutero-Pauline Letter to the Ephesians which, although chronologically later than the other texts cited, still reflects, under the requirements of an imitative pseudepigraphy (see Zimmermann 2003a and 2003b; and Frey et al. 2009), the basic elements of Pauline theology and ethics, which can be perceived particularly well in our case.

4.1 Subordination and services of love (Eph 5:21-33)

Like the *Oeconomicus* literature, the Christian texts reveal a hierarchical classification of man and woman in marriage as in other domains of life. In the

21 For a more general discussion see Loader 2010.

first letter to the Corinthians, Paul explicitly uses the metaphor of the head in order to express the super- and subordination of man and woman:

> 1 Cor 11:3: But I wish you to understand that, while every man has Christ for his Head, woman's head is man (κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνήρ), as Christ's Head is God.

1 Cor 14:34 demonstrates the limitations placed on women in the community:

> 1 Cor 14:34: They have no license to speak, but should keep their place (ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν) as the law directs.

The verb that Paul uses here, ὑποτάσσεσθαι, can be understood as a *terminus technicus* for a social order which emerged primarily in the so-called *Haustafel* in the NT. This genre is in the direct tradition of the Oeconomicus literature and occurs in various places in the NT (for example Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 5:21-6:9; 1 Pet 2:18-3:7; Titus 2:1-10). The *Haustafel* were meant to regulate the relationships of various parties in the household, the οἶκος, concretely relationships between slaves and masters, parents and children, and also between men and women in a marriage. The synopsis below shows the verses central to our topic:

Col 3:18	Eph 5:21-22	1 Pet 3:1	Titus 2:4-5
Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὡς ἀνῆκεν ἐν κυρίῳ. Wives, be subject to your husbands; that is your Christian duty.	αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ, Wives be subject to your husbands as to the Lord.	Ὁμοίως [αἱ] γυναικες, ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν, In the same way you women must accept the authority of your husbands	τὰς νέας (…) ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν, the young women to (…) respect the authority of their own husbands

Tab. Synopsis of the NT *Haustafeln*

The verb ὑποτάσσεσθαι determines the subordination of the wife. The relationship of the two sexes in the marriage, one must conclude, is governed along strict hierarchical lines.

In the following I would like to take a more detailed look at the *Haustafel* in Eph 5:21-33 from the perspective of the issue being examined here. While we come upon the subordinate formulation "wives be subject to your husbands",

which presumably comes directly from Col 3, we also see definitive shifts in accent. The subordination in Eph 5:21a is not demanded only from the wives, but from both partners:

> Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.
>
> Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,

Not only is it a novelty for the NT *Haustafel* that here, unlike in the Oeconomicus tradition, all parties are spoken to directly, but in addition, Eph 5 radically upsets the one-sided subordination of women (see Zimmermann 2001:327-334 and 2010). The text demonstrates a twofold structure in which the man-woman relationship and the Christ-church relationship can be separated from one another. On the one hand, the terminological pair man and woman (ἀνήρ – γυνή) are named 6 times (vv. 22a; 23a; 24b; 25a; 28a; 33c) while, on the other hand, Christ and the church (ἐκκλησία) are named together 5 times (vv. 23b; 24a; 25b; 29b; 32b) and in other places are related to each other in a subject-object structure. The question that arises in the exegetical tradition out of this twofold theme of whether this is an ethical or a theological text is of no concern to the metaphorical character of the text. If we look at metaphor in the sense of recent so-called "interaction theory," we must reject a one-sided transfer of meaning. The relationship between man and woman thus does not become the unimportant vehicle of an ecclesiastical statement. Instead both levels mutually define and clarify each other. That which is stated about the relationship between Christ and the church can and must now also directly apply to the relationship between the marital partners. The text itself provides for this through its linguistically-emphasized, referential structure in which it very frequently uses comparative particles to create oscillation between the two themes.

If we employ this background when considering texts on marital relationships, we will be forced to oppose even more clearly the uncritical maintenance of a hierarchical ideal of marriage. The author of Ephesians is indeed located within traditional marriage ethics as is demonstrated by the use of political images (head-body) as well as by the adoption of the Oeconomicus tradition and pedagogical categories (to raise, to take care of). However, a more exact analysis of the metaphoric network reveals a significant shift of accent that can be regarded as a conscious relativization or even breaking down of the usual semantics of domination. Central to this process is love. The men are called upon to provide for the welfare of their wives (v. 29a) and also to "feed", to "cleanse" and to "care for" them in a bodily sense. They should "love" their wives. The respectful care that is expressed in the term love, however, goes far beyond a pedagogical concern. According to Eph 5, the husband is responsible for the beauty and purity of his wife, in addition to providing

and caring for her (v. 29a). Using the reciprocity of the religious and ethical levels of meaning and their terminological limitation, one can even extract an ethical dimension from the reference to the "salvation of the body" (v. 23b) because husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies (v. 28a). We could summarize somewhat boldly here that husbands are given the responsibility to care for the "holiness" of their wives in body and soul. Thus, instead of the maintenance of a patriarchal claim or the cementing of a role of dominance, we see in Eph 5 a comprehensive call to husbands to meet their wives in love. In contrast to the duties given to husbands here, the call to wives to subject themselves (vv. 22-24, 33) seems weak and formulaic and at the end is modified linguistically (v. 33: the woman pays respect to her husband).

The author of Ephesians is therefore tendentially in line with the "dual-personal" marital ideal of Plutarch or Musonius (see above), who described the relationship between the partners as one of mutual loyalty. As in Eph 5, Musonius Rufus emphasized the ministrations of the partners and praised the effort "to surpass each other in love" (Musonius, *Reliquiae* 13a). In *Conjug. prae.* 34, Plutarch referred to the central importance of love as a unifying bond when he described the highest form of marriage as an inseparable unity. The term κρᾶσις (fusion), which he borrowed from Stoic physics and used to describe this unification, corresponds factually to μὶα σάρξ-union, which the author of Ephesians adopts from the biblical Jewish tradition. It is through love that the marital partners are joined in a new and inseparable unity. The proximity to Plutarch is also revealed in *Mor.* 142e (= *Conjug. prae.* 33), in which Plutarch compares domination over women to the control of one's own body by means of the soul.[22] Very much like in Eph 5, the concern for the other in the end fuses with the "concern for oneself" (Foucault); love of the other and love of oneself remain interwoven.

The fact that the Letter to the Ephesians does not reflect an exceptional opinion can be underlined by turning to further texts from the *Corpus Paulinum*. Paul's student who wrote the pseudepigraphal Letter to the Ephesians upholds the tradition of his teacher in his classification of the sexes. For even though Paul uses, as previously mentioned, hierarchical relationship formulas, we also see relativized and reciprocal formulations. In chapter 11 of 1 Cor, not far away from the sentence cited above about the commandment of silence for women and directly after the main metaphor, we read:

22 Plutarch states: "In the same way that it is possible to care for the body without serving one's own wants and desires, it is also possible to rule over a woman and at the same time to please her and be friendly to her." (*Mor.* 142e). For the full text see Martano and Tirelli 1990:84.

1 Cor 11:11-12:

11 πλὴν οὔτε γυνὴ χωρὶς ἀνδρὸς οὔτε ἀνὴρ χωρὶς γυναικὸς ἐν κυρίῳ·

12 ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ γυνὴ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός, οὕτως καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ διὰ τῆς γυναικός· τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.

11 And yet, in Christ's fellowship woman is as essential to man as man to woman.

12 If woman was made out of man, it is through woman that man now comes to be; and God is the source of all.

In this context we must also mention the verse from Gal 2:38 which reduces the difference between the sexes with regard to the revelation of Christ.

Gal 3,28:

οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ·

πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

There is no such thing as male and female for you are all one person in Christ Jesus.

In Christ all differences between man and woman are removed. The impact of this is also felt in the marital relationship, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

4.2 Physicality and sexuality within the relationship (1 Cor 5-7)

Reciprocal formulations (1 Cor 7:2: let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband) are found frequently in 1 Cor 7 and are important for our topic. All of the subsequent statements underline this twofold perspective, even the literal repetition. Both sexes are addressed equally, whether regarding the marital duties in v. 3, the claims on the body in v. 4 or even in the prohibition of divorce in vv. 10-11. We must therefore ask whether Paul supports rigorous sexual ethics that correspond to the tendency toward an equal partnership as described in the second section. Will sexuality, like in Musonius or Philo, be subjected to strict rules such as the rejection as immoral of extramarital sexual relations and the limitation of sexuality within marriage to the purpose of reproduction?

A quick look seems at first to confirm this image. In 1 Cor 5, Paul deals with a case of incest in which a male member of the community appears to be living with the wife of his father (1 Cor 5:1: the ἔχειν indicates marital cohabitation) (see Horrell 2009). According to rigid implementation of the Jewish sexual codex, this is an offense against the community. "Root out the evil-doer from your community." (1 Cor 5:13 taking up Deut 17:7). The extramarital abnormal sexual intercourse with a prostitute indicated in 1 Cor 16:12-20 is also ethically reprehensible (see May 2004:92-142). The Corinthians therefore ask in 1 Cor 7:1 whether it would not be better to completely renounce sex.

At this point, an answer from Paul that conformed to his environs would have been that sexual intercourse in marriage is necessary for reproduction.[23] However, unlike in the entire early Judaic and Hellenic-Judaic discourse, Paul does not create functional ties between sexuality and procreation. Reproduction does not play a role in any of the statements about sexual ethics in 1 Cor 5-7. The radical renunciation of marriage that Paul lives and favors for others (1 Cor 7:7) is not represented as the only valid lifestyle. Everyone has his or her own gift, all of which differ from each other. Marriage is also clearly such a gift – gift of grace. Thus Paul negates the Corinthians' question. It is not better not to touch any woman – either for unmarried men or for the married men who are the subject at that moment (unlike in vv. 8-9).

Paul does not favor sexual asceticism in marriage. Instead, he regards sexual desire to be a motivation for marriage. In order to avoid *porneia*, every man should have his wife and every woman her husband (1 Cor 7:2). Marriage is not tied to the conception of children; instead it is legitimized on the basis of sexual needs. This thought is expanded in 1 Cor 7:8-9 with a look at the unmarried and widows: It is good to remain unmarried like Paul; however, if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with desire (literally "to burn" πυροῦσθαι, see 1Cor 7:7-8).

I do not want to go into a discussion here of whether marriage is considered to be the second choice or whether it can been seen as an equally valuable lifestyle because this discussion distracts from a definitive statement in the text. What is remarkable here is that Paul proclaims a relationship of equality, as demonstrated by the reciprocal formulations, and that he describes the relationship of the marital partners explicitly as a sexual relationship. Thus, sexuality is a constitutive factor in the motivation and the continued existence of a marriage – independent of reproduction. This statement is supported in other places. The *Haustafel* in Eph 5:21-33 mentioned above clearly allude

23 In summary, Deming (2004:49) notes: "This is because marriage in the ancient world almost always resulted in the birth of children. In marrying, a man thus obligated himself to providing for a family." On the question of renouncing marriage see Deming 2004:107-27.

to the sexual relationship. The commandment of love that is applied here to the marital partners, as well as the verse cited from Gen (Gen 2:24), which speaks of the bodily unity μὶα σάρξ of the married couple, were interpreted in early Judaic and rabbinical writings as having to do with sexual alliance (see Zimmermann 2000). The emphasis of the aesthetic dimension of the woman's beauty also confirms this tendency.

In my opinion, the short digression on marriage in the oldest of Paul's letters, 1 Thess, also explicitly emphasizes the sexual dimension of marriage. 1 Thessalonians 4:4 contains several problems that cannot be discussed here in detail (see Holtz 1986:156-161; Malherbe 2000: 224-241; Caragounis 2002). However I would like to mention the following in order to explain my position:

> 1Thess 4:4
>
> εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ,
>
> each one of you must learn to gain mastery over his vessel, to hallow and honor it,

The term σκεῦος creates an interpretive challenge. Its literal meaning, "vessel," clearly reveals its metaphorical use here. Since the times of the early church, two or three possible meanings have been under discussion (see Malherbe 2000: 226-228):

> 1) σκεῦος means "wife"
>
> 2) σκεῦος means "body" and recently this has been differentiated even further by regarding body as a euphemism for a special part of the body:
>
> 3) the "male sexual organ."

In order to limit the acute ambiguity of this metaphorical expression, recent exegetical literature has referred to similar expressions in the tradition and its environs. However, for this expression, the road ends exactly at this point. There are only few records of a metaphoric use of σκεῦος and they themselves are anything but unambiguous (e.g., 1 Sam 21:6 and 4Q416) (see Konradt 2001:131-132).

The use of σκεῦος for "body" is clearer although the Hebrew term *k^{e}lî* is primarily used. The body of man is a "vessel," whether it be that the creator is

introduced as a potter, drawing on Gen 2-3 and Jer 18 (see Rom 9:21-23)[24] or whether humans are represented as vessels for the Holy Spirit (Herm. *Mand.* V 1.2; *Barn.* 7.3; 11.9), for wisdom (*b. Taan.* 7a; see *b. Ned.* 50b), or even for the devil (TNaph 8.6). Finally we also find the third meaning, in which σκεῦος is a metaphor for "wife." Especially in rabbinical writings, women are regarded as the "vessel" for the seed of the man (see Maurer 1964:361-362), which is a manner of speaking also recorded in a fragment of Qumran (4Q416 fr. 2 2.21).

Therefore, there are possible parallel texts for all two or three interpretative variations, none of which, however, prescribe one compelling interpretation of 1 Thess 4:4-5. Metaphors are not substituted comparisons that can be limited to one lexeme. They are text phenomena that are determined primarily by the respective context. Therefore, we must involve the immediate context in our examination.

The introductory verses present a contrast with πορνεία, that is, with illicit sexual behavior. First we must consider the possessive pronoun that expresses a relationship of classification. τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος would then mean, on the one hand, his own body or more specifically his male sexual organ, or, on the other hand, his (own) wife. Corresponding to the previous possessive relationship, the attached verb κτᾶσθαι is then understood as "controlling, ruling" his own body or as "obtaining, possessing" his wife. Thus we have the question of what is being contrasted with πορνεία within the scope of the introduction – is it the control of his own body in the sense of sexual needs or is it the sexual relationship to his wife?

A certain preference seems to emerge here because κτᾶσθαι can only be translated as "self control of the own body" if the progressive verb is permanently understood as "to own, to rule."[25] Furthermore, the continuation of the sentence suggests a clear definition, as there is a qualifying clarification with a contrastive structure "not – but rather" (that which was previously offered should take place "in holiness and honor, not in passionate desire"). If vv. 4-5 were about the control of sexual instinct in the sense of the stoic control of emotion, this itself would be a qualifying statement that would come into conflict with the subsequent qualifying contrast: "control his body/his sexual organ … not in passionate desire" This, however, does not make sense.

In short, I follow those interpreters who understand τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι as a euphemistic expression for sexual intercourse with one's own wife. The literal translation "that each of you knows how to obtain 'his vessel'" can be

24 We also find σκεῦος having this meaning with the adjective ὀστράκινος (fictile) in Paul, see 2Cor 4,7.

25 This cannot be ruled out in principle, as Konradt (2001:134) noted with reference to Plato, Leg 829c; however, it is rather improbable (see Holtz 1986:157).

metaphorically understood as "that each of you knows/learns how to have a sexual intercourse with his wife" and further "in holiness and with respect, not in passionate desire like the heathens."

If, therefore, this evidence confirms that the sexual relationship of the marital partners is of central importance in 1 Thess 4, this text expresses more than just the "that." Along with Konradt, we can state with regard to 1 Thess 4:4-5:

> The point is not that a Christian has sexual intercourse only *within* marriage (v. 3b), but rather that there is a *specific way in which* the intercourse must take place (Konradt 2001:135).

In the subsequent section, I will be interested in this "specific way," i.e., in the "how." Paul and other early Christian writers dared to do that which has long since been transferred from the domain of the church and theology to that of sexual therapists – they presumed to make statements about the sexual practices of married couples.

4.3 A look into the bedroom or the "how" of the sexual activity in marriage

Let us go back to 1 Cor 7. Paul not only recognizes the justification of sexuality, he also makes concrete statements about what the sexual life of a married couple should look like. We read in 1 Cor 7:3 that sexuality is regarded not as a concession, but as an obligation (ὀφειλή). In a world hostile to women, this formulation has had, because of the disregard for Paul's reciprocal manner of speech, a fatal impact throughout history, reaching even into the civil code of the German legal system.

> 1 Cor 7:3
>
> τῇ γυναικὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τὴν ὀφειλὴν ἀποδιδότω, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡ γυνὴ τῷ ἀνδρί.
>
> The husband must give the wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due.

Looking at the first part of the verse, the husband owes the wife sexual intercourse without temporal or functional limits. Sexual intercourse is not tied to a specific purpose, such as reproduction, and it should not be withheld negatively for an outside purpose, as is stated in v. 5 "do not deny yourselves to one another" – that is the basic guideline. εἰ μήτι (unless) allows only one exception – for prayer.

1Cor 7:5

μὴ ἀποστερεῖτε ἀλλήλους, εἰ μήτι αν ἐκ συμφώνου πρὸς καιρόν, ἵνα σχολάσητε τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἦτε, ἵνα μὴ πειράζῃ ὑμᾶς ὁ σατανᾶς διὰ τὴν ἀκρασίαν ὑμῶν.

Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwards you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan.

There should and must be sexuality in marriage in order to avoid temptation. However, this does not go far enough. The middle verse,1 Cor 7:4, which we skipped, offers a remarkable impetus for sexual ethics that one would scarcely have expected from a 1st century Christian who renounced marriage in his own life:

1 Cor 7:4

ἡ γυνὴ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει ἀλλὰ ὁ ἀνήρ, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει ἀλλὰ ἡ γυνή.

The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's.

Sexuality is described as a surrender, without reservation, of one's own body to one's partner. This is a risky form of sexual ethics because it functions only if neither partner exploits the other's trust. The partner's body that has been entrusted to one may not be secretly subjected to one's own purposes or one's own satisfaction because this would destroy the absolute reciprocity. We can see here sexual ethics that comes astonishingly close to modern sexual ethical principles – sexuality can only succeed if it is understood as radical relinquishment of any form of ownership. Sexuality does not serve the satisfaction of one's own sexual needs, the "caring for oneself" (Foucault). But we are also not dealing with the sacrificial "caring for the other," the passive surrendering of oneself to the needs of the other. Instead, the boundaries between active and passive that were so definitive for ancient sexuality are broken down. Loving oneself and loving the other become one.

While the philosophy of the time, for example of Musonius, suggests "autonomous" self-control as a solution for the dangers of the powerful sexual instinct, Paul proclaims a "heteronomous" altruistic solution. Anyone who cannot resist their sexual instinct and cannot assume, like Paul, an ascetic way of life without marriage, should entrust his or her needs to his or her marital partner. Paul expresses this qualitative statement on sexual behavior

concisely in 1 Thess 4: married couples should engage in sexual activity in "holiness and respect." But how should this take place? Are holiness and sexuality not mutually exclusive or even mutually competitive forms of human life?

4.4 Sexuality and holiness –a wild and inseparable couple?

It is striking that the issue of "holiness" appears in all of the NT texts dealt with so far. In Eph 5, the loving care of the Christian husband is concerned with the "holiness" of his wife (Eph 5:26: ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ). "Holiness" is also found several times in 1 Cor 5-7 (1 Cor 6:18; 7:14). Finally, 1 Thess 4:4-5 speaks explicitly of sexual intercourse "in holiness." These observations evoke the question – Is there a terminologically stable relationship between ἁγιασμός and the sexual sphere? Research generally refutes such a relationship (see Holtz 1986:159 and v. Lips 2006).

And in fact we seem to see, if not a contrasting relationship, then a competitive relationship between the two domains (Zimmermann 2001:690-711). Illicit sexual intercourse such as that discussed in 1 Cor 6:12-20 in the case of sex with a prostitute does not coincide with the holiness of the body because the body is a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:18). To a certain extent, marital sexual activity is also in competition with the sphere of holiness. In order to pray, one should keep one's distance from sexual activity (1 Cor 7:5). There is an even clearer contrast at the end of the chapter when Paul speaks about the unmarried:

> 1 Cor 7:32-34
>
> The unmarried man cares for the Lord's business; his aim is to please the Lord; 33 But the married man cares for worldly things; his aim is to please his wife 34 and he has a divided mind. The unmarried or celibate woman cares for the Lord's business; her aim is to be dedicated to him in body as in spirit (ἵνα ᾖ ἁγία καὶ τῷ σώματι καὶ τῷ πνεύματι) but the married woman cares for worldly things; her aim is to please her husband.

It would, however, be premature to conclude that holiness and sexuality are mutually exclusive for Paul. Although we can see a radical contrast between *porneia* and holiness, we do not see the same contrast between sexuality in general and holiness. This is suggested by a passage in 1 Cor 7 that we have so far overlooked. In this passage, Paul is dealing with the question of whether extant mixed marriages between Christians and non-Christians can be ethically justified. Paul generally accepts the mixed couples (1 Cor 7:12

–13). But more significant is the reason for the affirmation. A mixed marriage is not only legitimized but also "consecrated" by the Christian partners:

> 1 Cor 7:14:
>
> ἡγίασται γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ ὁ ἄπιστος ἐν τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ ἡγίασται ἡ γυνὴ ἡ ἄπιστος ἐν τῷ ἀδελφῷ·
>
> For the heathen husband now belongs to God through his Christian wife, and the heathen wife through her Christian husband.

The holiness of the Christian partner is not endangered by the heathen partner (as it would be by a prostitute). Instead it has an integrative effect on the heathen partner. But how does this consecration take place? Is knowledge, intercession, cohabitation sufficient? The following sentence fragment indicates that that it is the physicality, the sexual community that actively draws the heathen partner into the domain of holiness.

> 1 Cor 7:14b:
>
> ἐπεὶ ἄρα τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν ἀκάθαρτά ἐστιν, νῦν δὲ ἅγιά ἐστιν.
>
> Otherwise your children would not belong to God, whereas in fact they do.

Children are the fruit of sexual union. As they are holy and not impure, the act of their conception must also be considered to be holy. The consecration takes place, therefore, not despite or alongside, but *through* sexual unification.[26] It is the external determination, the non-possessing of one's own body that brings sexuality and holiness together. This is revealed in the statements in 1 Cor 6:12-20. Because the body does not belong to man himself, but instead comes from God and is the temple of the Holy Spirit, it must not be joined with a prostitute.

26 Paul can speak of the "holiness of the body" in other places, see Rom 6:19: In the service of righteousness the body becomes holy; Rom 12:1: I implore you to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance.

1 Cor 6:19:

ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματός ἐστιν οὗ ἔχετε ἀπὸ θεοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἑαυτῶν;

Do you not know that your body is a shrine of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is God's gift to you? *You do not belong to yourselves*;

This not-possessing of one's own body, however, does not need to lead to asceticism. According to 1 Cor 7, it can be expressed in sexual practice that allows for this characteristic. The sexual partners do not possess nor even rule their own bodies themselves; they surrender them reciprocally to the other (1 Cor 7:4).

If we now consider 1 Thess 4:4-5 again, it becomes clear that the contrast developed here does not pit passionate sexuality against functional sexual intercourse or the uninhibited satisfaction of desire against the marital fulfillment of obligation. If marital partners have sexual intercourse "in holiness and respect," this act of unification should express the non-possessing and the gift character that accompanies sexual fulfillment. Only in this way can physical love between man and woman finally mirror the relationship between Christ and the church.

The same is true of the statement in the Letter to the Ephesians. In Eph 5:21-33 men in particular are obligated to orient their love entirely to the needs of their wives. This is not a sacrifice or a form of self-denial but rather fulfils the commandment to love others in which the love of another person and the love of oneself converge and are expressed in the mystery of physical unity. Paul's texts, therefore, suggest the following conclusion – the holiness of marriage is expressed particularly through sexuality, through the physical unification of the sexes.

5. GUIDELINES FOR UNDERSTANDING MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO THE EVIDENCE OF THE NT

Finally, I would like to outline several guidelines for a system of marital and sexual ethics that have the potential to motivate discussion on this topic. We cannot speak of marital or sexual ethics in the sense of a foundational theory of marital behavior. Nevertheless, there are justifications and arguments that allow us to speak of "implicit sexual ethics" (see Zimmermann 2007 and 2009).

1. The NT texts reflect the shift in the conception of marriage that occurred around the onset of the Common Era in which marriage changed from

a hierarchically organized institution to a holistic relationship between partners. In the NT *Haustafel*, elements of the subordination of the wife remain alongside other sections that proclaim the equality of man and woman in marriage (particularly 1 Cor 7; 11).

2. The marital relationship is described as a community that can be clarified through the category of "love" (Eph 5), which, unlike today, was not necessarily the rule in antiquity.

3. The remarkable aspect of the NT marital ethos in the context of the times is, however, not that certain forms of sexuality were deemed to be against the rules, but rather that sexuality was given a legitimate place *within* marriage.

4. According to Paul, marital sexuality does not primarily serve the purpose of reproduction but is perceived as the incentive for and permanent core of marital community.

5. According to 1 Cor 7, the completely reciprocal surrender of one's own body to the other is proclaimed to be the ethical rule in sexual intercourse. The control of affect and desire are hereby not one's own virtue but instead are transferred to the partner.

6. Paul rejects any foreign purposes of sexuality and sexual denial. Instead the gift character of sexuality is emphasized. Marital sexuality understood in this way need not be opposed to holiness but rather can be seen as an expression of holiness.

In its radical non-possessing character sexuality can not only be transformed into holiness but can also become the image of divine holiness.[27] The Jewish mystics describe it as follows:

> In the Sohar[28] we read: "If man and woman join each other in love and holiness, the divine presence rests on the marital bed. If there is no union of husband and wife, people do not deserve to look upon the divine presence.… After the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the household bedroom was regarded as one aspect of the once so glorious sanctum."

Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, also called Ramban (1194-1270), teaches the following in his Igerhet Hakodesch: "If sexual intercourse is practiced for

27 See on this idea already by Jubilees, where sexual union is highlighted as a core element in the creation story, see Jub 3:1-7.

28 The Sohar, Hebrew זהר, is the most important part of the Kabbalah, which primarily contains commentaries on Torah texts in the form of homiletic meditations, narrations and dialogues.

the sake of heaven, there is nothing else that is equally holy and pure" (cited by Westheimer and Mark 1996:14).

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