

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Divinity

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**Title: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF INTER-RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE:
IMPLICATION FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN NEW
TAFO, GHANA**

Researcher: Christian Fosu

Primary Advisor: Davidson Razafiarivony, PhD

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Marriage is in every respect a great concern in every socio-cultural affair and more so in every socio-religious culture. Within the religio-cultural factors is the dynamics of mixed marriage which is well featured in the Scriptures. Though the biblical information concerning mixed marriage is not subpar, the phenomenon still seems unimportant in Christendom today. While Christians could be well informed with the biblical instructions on the subject, it continues to plague many Christian marriages today because of people's ignorance about it. This is perhaps because the Scriptures' view concerning mixed marriage still lacks the utmost concern it deserves.

It is the deductive conclusion of this research that the concept of mixed marriage is well-featured in the Scriptures. However, the biblical situation under which mixed marriage is featured is in many respects different from the situational underpinnings of mixed marriage in today's contemporary context. Yet, the knowledge of Scripture about mixed marriage can provide significant guiding

principles for what we face today. In other words, the setting within which the Bible discusses mixed marriage seems fairly contemporarily different. However, it can still provide some essential principles on the subject for us today.

This research dips into this so-called sensitive issue of mixed marriage which seems outdated today and calls attention to its ignored relevance. It discusses the issue of mixed marriages both in the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). The project peruses the possible instances of mixed marriages in the Scriptures and evaluates and discusses their implications then and now. The OT has some stern instructions against mixed marriage that should not be ignored. In almost all of the categories of the OT (Pentateuch, Historical Books, and the Prophets), some instances call attention to mixed marriage. The NT has little to say about mixed marriage. However, the issue is well featured in the writings of Paul, particularly in both Corinthian correspondences.

The method of discussion features biblical analysis, exegetical analysis, and theological analysis, to bring into perspective the biblical information concerning mixed marriage and its contemporary relevance. The project uncovers the knowledge gap around the issue of mixed marriage and calls attention to scholars' need to have their contributions felt on the issue.

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A project

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

by

Christian Fosu

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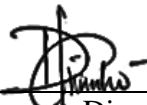
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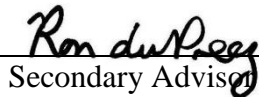
APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:



Primary Advisor
Davidson Razafiarivony, PhD



Programme Director, MDiv
David Odhiambo, PhD



Secondary Advisor
Ronald A. G. du Preez, PhD, ThD, DMin

Dean, Theological Seminary
Feliks Ponyatovskiy, PhD

Adventist University of Africa

Date: May 2024

To God be the Glory

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a desire, the foretaste of which everyone wants to be a partaker. The colossus of this divine institution is probably the apogee of all relationships. As a result, every man and every woman want the very best for a future partner. Therefore, the dilemma of who to marry and who not to marry is a decision that universally concerns all humanity.

Everyone seems to understand that nothing hurts so much as marrying someone who will have the license to hurt you for a lifetime.

This is no less a trivial matter for everyone and Christians in particular – for they often do not possess any possible way of excuse for divorce without any discipline from the church. Since Christians do not have the luxury to put away their partners “for *just* any reason,” (Matt 19:3, NKJV), the question of preference continues to linger in the minds of all who want to enter the marriage institution. In a letter to Farel, John Calvin wrote concerning the woman he desires to marry: “Always keep in mind what I seek to find in her; for I am not one of those insane lovers who embrace even the vices of those they are in love with when they are smitten at first sight with a fine figure. The only beauty which allures me is this – that she be chaste, not too nice or fastidious, economical, patient, and likely to take care of my health.”¹

¹ John Calvin, *Letters of John Calvin: Selected from the Monnet Edition* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 24.

Calvin is surely not selfish in his standards and expectations. Many of these qualities and values characterize what people expect in their prospective partners. Men and women repeatedly ask themselves whether they see these values in the people they likely see as potential mates.

Besides these and other questions of great importance, the question that stands tall among members of almost all religious believers is whether or not to marry within the denomination one belongs to. This mind-boggling and thought-provoking question of why and why not to marry from a particular religious denomination perpetually perplexes almost everyone alike.

Most religious young people ignorantly sideline this matter as not so important. Yet still, others consider it one of the most important issues to think through and consider. Even those who have viewed this as extremely important are sometimes caught in the thought net of 'I have waited far too long and no one is coming.' This is almost always the concern of most young ladies in the churches. With this mindset, they mostly compromise, and what they once held as an important issue becomes not so important at all. Many people also obliviously feel that upon settling the issue of 'I love him' or 'I love her,' every other issue is covered and that everything will fall into its proper place at the right time.

Better still, many religious denominations make it an obligation to caution their members of the dangers of marrying outside the denomination. Some of these denominations support their obligation with strong written instructions against those who decide to act contrary and otherwise. Jews, Seventh-day Adventists, and the Roman Catholic Church seem to be the churches with properly documented instructions to guide members on this issue. However, Catholics' strict objection

against every form of intermarriage reveals the general laxity in Protestants' protestation against mixed marriage.²

Some denominations are not so concerned as long as it is a Christian denomination.³ Certain Christian churches will raise the strongest objection as far as the choice is from one particular Christian group which they have singled out as too different from themselves and separated.⁴

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the Christian denominations that had raised strong concerns against members who want to marry outside the group. The church has written documents that guide its members against acting contrary to its teachings concerning this issue.⁵ While some members still defy the church's instructions on this matter, not a few Adventist young people in honor of the church's position have delayed their marriages in an attempt to have the privilege of marrying someone from their denomination. Many people have been maligned in the church for marrying outside the Adventist Church. Yet still, others have left the Adventist Church because of some unfortunate attitude they received from church members for marrying outside the church into a different denomination.

Repeatedly, people who have stumbled and tangled into marrying outside their churches attest to their challenges. The disparity of conduct towards intermarital

² W. Seward Salisbury, "Religious Identification, Mixed Marriage and Conversion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 125-129, accessed 21 June 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1385260>.

³ Ruth Shonle Cavan, "Concepts and Terminology in Interreligious Marriage," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1970): 311-320, accessed 21 June, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1384577>.

⁴ Samuel Adjei, Associate Minister, Ramseyer Presbyterian Church, interview by the author, Kumasi, 11 August 2020.

⁵ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 153, 154.

couples by their church members who feel disappointed by their decision is sometimes irksome. However, the problem of believers marrying outside their denominations is still rife.⁶ I suppose this is due to a lack of solid Biblical knowledge and clarity on the issue.

Many young people in the church assume that the church's stern stand on this issue is perhaps based on tradition and convenience in an attempt to keep members in the church and hold on to them. This mindset of the youth in the church is far from being curtailed because the church barely explains its position on this matter, tagging it as a 'sensitive issue.' Notwithstanding, most ministers are silent on this issue; many of them have varied and different opinions contrary to the church's stance.⁷

I believe that anyone who decides to take the daring step of denying an uttered and expressed love from someone outside his or her belief must do so based on a divine restraint rather than a church's preference or even an experienced counsel, however good it may be. Therefore, finding the line of demarcation that settles the minds of many confused Adventist youths on where to stand based on what the Bible has said on this issue is of critical importance.

Statement of the Problem

Marriage within akin religious denominations is highly encouraged by almost all denominations everywhere. Almost all religions strongly reject interreligious marriage. Within the Christian religion, there is hardly a denomination that does not favor and approve of intradenominational marriage with some level of concern over

⁶ Alex Minichele Sewenet, Fasil Merawi Tessagaye, and Getnet Tadele, "Interreligious Marriage: Social and Religious Perspective," *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 3, no. 6 (2017): 355-362, accessed 21 June 2019, <http://www.onlinejournal.in>.

⁷ Daniel Berchie, "Marrying an 'Unbelieving' Partner: An Exegetical Study of 2 Corinthians 6:14," *Valley View University Journal of Theology* 3 (2014): 1-17, accessed 22 February 2021, https://www.academia.edu/27495468/MARRYING_AN_UNBELIEVING_PARTNER_AN_EXEGETICAL_STUDY_OF_2_CORINTHIANS_6_14.

interdenominational marriage. It is factual that almost all churches look with scorn on any marital choice of any member who takes him or her out of the church.

Therefore, many Adventist Churches are constantly concerned with the frequent marriages between their members and members of churches of different beliefs. The recurrence of this type of association in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the New-Tafo district has become problematic.⁸ For instance, if you consider the records of the Home and Family Life department of the New-Tafo Church for the past three years and this current year of 2022, it is easy to view the situation as problematic. In 2019, the records show the arrangement of 23 marriages that involved members. Out of these, five of them were mixed marriages. This is about twenty-one percent; out of these five, two males of the Adventist Church married two females from a non-Adventist Church, while three females of the Adventist Church married three males from non-Adventist Churches. The non-Adventist Churches included the Methodist Church, Assemblies of God, Holy Trinity Church, and Spoken Word Ministry. Again, in 2020, there were eight marriage arrangements reported; out of these, four were mixed marriages. This is fifty percent; in this case, three male Adventists married three female non-Adventists, while one female Adventist married one male non-Adventist. The non-Adventist Churches involved included the Methodist church, Assemblies of God, and Christ Apostolic Church. Furthermore, in 2021, eleven marriage arrangements were recorded. Out of these, seven were mixed marriages. This is about sixty percent. Among these seven, five were Adventist males who married five non-Adventist females, and two were Adventist females who married two non-Adventist males. The non-Adventist

⁸ This information comes as a result of a conversation with departmental leaders and personal experience, having worked in the leadership ranks of the church.

Churches involved included the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Pentecost Church, the Apostle Continuation Church, and the Assemblies of God. In this year, 2022, though not yet ended, there have been two marriage arrangements recorded. Out of these, one is a mixed marriage that involved a male Adventist married to a female non-Adventist, and the non-Adventist Church is Assemblies of God.

Notwithstanding, many members of the Adventist Church feel unsatisfied with the church's position on this matter.⁹ Some claim that many young adults are bound by the denominationally preconditioned marriage chains that they dare not break. Others still query whether those who have strictly followed this denominationally preferred position and have faithfully come out with Adventist partners are even able to attain a harmonious matrimonial safe haven and perfect marital bliss. Others still question whether the church's position has become a perpetual peril to young people in the church. The concern is that the dominant thought of ministers in engaging individuals ready to form interfaith marriages is about the continuity of the faith and not about the welfare of the to-be couple.¹⁰

How can we make these enquiring sentiments a Biblical concern? The scripture's position on marriage outside one's religion and religious denomination is what this paper seeks to address.

⁹ Ron du Preez, "The God-given Marital Mandate: Monogamous, Heterosexual, Intrafaith," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 10, no. 1-2 (1999): 23-40, accessed 24 February 2021, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pd/vol12/iss2/3/>.

¹⁰ Jared Griffin, review of *Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage Is Transforming America*, by Naomi Schaefer Riley, *American Studies* 53, no. 4 (2014): 141-142, accessed 11 January 2021, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/566214> N1 – Volume 53, Number 4, 2014.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the Biblical perspective, if any, of inter-religious and consequently interdenominational marriage. It is to glean through the scripture to bring into perspective the Biblical stance on inter-religious marriage to make conspicuous the dividing line between inter-religious and interdenominational (interchurch/intrafaith) marriage.

The research also singles out the alarming situation of interdenominational marriages in the New Tafo District. It will ascertain the attitude of members towards intrafaith marriage. It will reveal and verify the factors influencing members' attitudes on the issue. It will outline the challenges and propose a suitable solution.

Significance of the Research

Of all the ordeals people are continuously confronted with, being denied the right to marry the person they supposedly love because of their religious affiliation. Considering all the challenges people face for their involvement in inter-religious and interdenominational marriages, it should be asked, is it worth getting involved? Otherwise, people have been denied their greatest privilege, perhaps of a lifetime, for something that was scripturally unfounded and biblically irrelevant.

This study will provide clarity on this issue so that people taking a stand will understand what they are up against and whether it is worth the price to pay. Many Christians, based on this, will escape the quagmires of marital life and enjoy their matrimonial life.

Besides, there is a general scarcity of literature that deals with the holistic Biblical view on inter-religious (along with interdenominational) marriage. Almost all the research materials that deal with mixed marriages are contextually philosophical and anthropological. Others that reflect religious intermarriage do so from a

sociological perspective.¹¹ Moreover, there is arguably little research that discusses inter-religious marriage (along with interdenominational marriage) generally as far as the research of the author is concerned, more especially in the New-Tafo district as the focus of the study.

Delimitation of the Study

This paper will limit its scope to marriages and mixed marriages in the Scriptures – both Old and New Testament. Some attention will be given to marriages within the Christian faith, along with the different denominations that at least have the Bible as a rule of faith.

While inter-religious marriage involves and revolves around different religions, I will focus on the evidence in both the OT and NT and apply its lessons to the practice in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, particularly in the New Tafo District.

The application of what is written in the sacred writings and what the church practices will be compared and considered in the Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the New Tafo district. This research will not discuss what Ellen White has said about mixed marriage, and I will not discuss the church manual of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Methodology and Procedure

This project will be a theological paper that will analyze a theological issue as stated by the topic. The method that will be employed will be in three folds, first, I will analyze several mixed marriage cases in the scripture and evaluate their theological import. This section will be chronological, assessing the occurrences of

¹¹ LaVell E. Saunders, “The Gradient of Ecumenism and Opposition to Religious Inter-marriage,” *Review of Religious Research* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1976): 107-119, accessed 20 June, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3510629>.

mixed marriages in the scripture. I will employ the aid of bible commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, and Lexicons in my attempt to analyze the context and content of these mixed marriages. I will try to ascertain the general and broad view of mixed marriage in the scripture. Secondly, I will analyze three texts in the Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor 7:15; 7:39 and 2 Cor 6:14). The analysis of these texts will be in the form of biblical exegesis (grammatical, historical exegetical study). Thirdly, I will use all the analysis and put together a systematic theological way of how we contemplate the issue and propose a solution to it.

This paper will employ an array of standard research materials according to the various chapter divisions to accomplish results. Various materials (both religious and non-religious) and authors (both religious and non-religious) will be used as they discuss the topic and produce relevant information concerning the issue.

Chapter one will focus on the introduction, which incorporates the background, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, delimitation, and methodology. This part will point to what is to be discussed, why it should be discussed, and how it will be discussed.

Chapter two discusses and reviews relevant literature on the topic. This section employs the various opinions and understanding of different people and religious organizations on the subject of inter-religious and interdenominational marriage. This aspect will be subject to the scrutiny of intermarriage in the churches of the New Tafo District of the SDA Church.

In chapters three and four, the thrust of the research will be accomplished. The research topic will be weighed on the balance of both the NT and the OT. This part will examine the Bible and critically consider specific accounts that relate to

marriages that are of interest to the topic. The experiences, effects, and consequences of people who were involved in this kind of marriage will be analyzed.

Chapter Five will analyze the mixed marriage situation in the New Tafo district of the SDA Church and examine certain marriages of this nature in the churches. As part of the conclusion, viable solutions will be suggested.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The General Concept of Marriage

The perception of what marriage is all about is prodigiously expressed in many words and in several ways. Nevertheless, certain key terms find a reflection in a variety of thoughts and expressions. Words like love, vow, oath, covenant, commitment, agreement, matrimony, witnesses, and long-lasting are perpetually present if not alluded to in almost all the various marriage concepts. Marriage is a derivative word from the French word *mari* and the Latin word *maritus* – husband. The word matrimony is derived from the Latin word *mater* – mother. Correspondingly, wedlock is from the Anglo-Saxon word *weddian* – pledge, covenant, and wedding.¹

According to Aristotle, society exists out of the natural desire in people to form friendships and engage in marriages.² It may seem natural, but the question remains: What is it that gives impetus to the natural to impel the separation of a natural bond of a family member to form a new bond with another of the opposite sex?³ Obviously, beyond the natural. The natural is easily instigated by love and

¹ John McClintock and James Strong, ed., *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature (CBTEL)*, s.v. “Marriage.”

² Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, 10th ed., trans. F. H. Peters (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1906) 278.

³ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, The International Critical Commentary (Manhattan, NY: Charles Scribners’s Sons, 1910), 70.

affection connecting people as couples.⁴ This affectionate connection ensures a sole sharing of the qualities of the individuals involved. This idea of marriage mutuality is shared by Olthuis in addition to troth, which he explains as the single most important concept that ultimately defines what marriage is all about.⁵ The result of this all-embracing commitment is an exclusively inclusive relationship, involving the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual faculties of an individual.⁶ This holistic exclusivity is achieved as a result of the attraction between two people of the opposite sex.⁷

Perhaps this connection of a man and a woman, which is eventually formalized and consecrated into marriage, is geared towards the procreation of young ones.⁸ However, to single out this reason as the only grounds for marriage presupposes that couples without the potential for childbearing ought not to be married.⁹

Harrison supposes marriage to be an institution of divine origin with a lasting union between a man and a woman ready to support each other.¹⁰ It is fairly clear that

⁴ R. R. Reno, *Genesis*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 83.

⁵ James H. Olthuis, "Marriage," *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, ed. David J. Atkinson and David H. Field (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 565, 566.

⁶ Lars I. Granberg, "Marriage," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 344, 345.

⁷ Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery (DBI)* (1998), s.v. "Marriage."

⁸ Hazel W. Perkin, "Marriage," *New International Bible Dictionary*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1967), 624. "The basic teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were propounded by Thomas Aquinas...and maintained that marriage was for procreation, for curbing of lust, and to experience a sacrament. Coition was not an integral part of marriage, and the very act transmitted original sin." [John P. Dever, "Marriage," *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 634.]

⁹ McClintock and Strong, *CBTEL*, s.v. "Marriage."

¹⁰ Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (1988), s.v. "Marriage."

this heavenly instituted institution has as its basic components: relationship, partnership, companionship, consensual sexual union, romance, vow saying, oath-taking, covenant-keeping, sexual union, cooperative and dual livelihood, parenthood, and shared religious devotion. In other words, marriage is a lifetime union characterized by true love and sustained by a commitment that endures forever.

In the days of the Roman emperors (at the time when divorce was somewhat approbative), Roman jurisprudence still regarded marriage as the right to share both civic and sacred privileges with someone over a lifetime.¹¹ This long and lasting union involves intimacy and individual dependence for one's entire lifetime.¹² Anderson maintains that as a divine institution, the marriage relationship is the strongest lifetime commitment between the opposite sexes, subsidiary only to the commitment couples should have for God.¹³ Therefore, in the face of marriage, all other human bonds are accounted for as peripheral.¹⁴ Marriage may well be summarized as a natural desire that is supernatural and designed from creation by God whereby people long to love and be loved in a lifetime and for a lifetime.

Marriage as Viewed by Some Church Fathers

In the thoughts of the church fathers – as reflected in their writings, marriage was an honorable thing (Heb 13:4). Though much of their writings on marriage were

¹¹ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingston, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (1974), s.v. "Marriage."

¹² Ralph H. Alexander, "Marriage," *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 2001), 513.

¹³ Douglas Anderson, "Marriage," *Holman Bible Dictionary*, ed. Trent C. Butler (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 924. This monogamous side of marriage was familiar among the Greeks and Romans. Allen C. Myers, ed., *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, (1987), s.v. "Marriage."

¹⁴ Granberg, "Marriage," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 345.

advanced in response to the then views of people who advocated for the abolition of marriage, these writings of defense in favour of marriage have embedded the tenets of their theology on marriage. Augustine argues that the tendency of humanity's instinct for association and the impulse for friendship is as God wills that ties may exist among people for which reason two people were created to people the earth.¹⁵

According to Clement of Alexandria, marriage fosters legitimate children who are not born out of wedlock, thus perpetuating procreation; marriage is to be accepted as an apparent good.¹⁶

According to Tertullian, marriage receives its granted permission as an acceptable practice for the sake of procreation.¹⁷ Minucius Felix advocates in favour of the marriage vow only when it is monogamously contracted with procreation in focus.¹⁸ In Origen's estimation, marriage and the raising of children must not cease.¹⁹ Based on generational continuity, Methodius emphasized the absurdity of prohibiting the marriage institution.²⁰ Athanasius, though upheld marriage as a Divine plan, considering it ordinary and worldly.²¹ Amidst several misfeelings he held about marriage, Gregory of Nyssa still maintained that the blessings of marriage bestowed by God are well known.²² Jerome reiterated the honorability of marriage but also

¹⁵ Augustine *On the Good of Marriage* (NPNF, 3.399, trans. C. L. Cornish).

¹⁶ Clement of Alexander *On Marriage* (ANF, 2.620, trans. B. P. Pratten).

¹⁷ Tertullian *To His Wife* (ANF, 4.66, trans. S. Thelwall).

¹⁸ Minucius Felix *The Octavius of Minucius Felix* (ANF, 4. 358, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis).

¹⁹ Origen *Book VIII* (ANF, 4.1173, trans. Frederick Crombie).

²⁰ Methodius *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins or Concerning Chastity* (ANF, 4. 522, trans. William R. Clark).

²¹ Athanasius *Letters of Athanasius* (NPNF, 2-4.1359, trans. Archibald Robertson).

²² Gregory of Nyssa *On Virginit*y (NPNF, 5.352, trans. William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson).

insisted on the preferability of virginity.²³ In addition to its honorableness, John Chrysostom also acknowledges its abundant blessings.²⁴

These terse words of Tertullian reflect the true embodiment of what marriage truly represents:

Where the flesh is one, one is the spirit too. Together they pray, together prostrate themselves, together perform their fasts; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally (are they) both (found) in the Church of God; equally at the banquet of God; equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides (ought) from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other. The sick is visited, the indigent relieved, with freedom... Between the two echo psalms and hymns; and they mutually challenge each other which shall better chant to their Lord. Such things when Christ sees and hears, He joys. To these He sends His own peace. Where two (are), there withal (is) He Himself. Where He (is), there the Evil One is not.²⁵

The context that characterized the messages of the early church fathers concerning their views on marriage was the campaign of asceticism against marriage by certain groups of people.

This kind of understanding they had at that time prompted some kind of hierarchical views towards sexuality, as well as male and female relationships. Jerome insisted that he has smiled on marriage as against most of the Christian Early fathers who on the scale of virtuousness ascribe 30 percent to those ever engaged in marriage; which is 30 percent lower than virgins.²⁶ They almost unanimously ranked virginity as the most exalted virtue and marriage as a lower virtue. Marriage becomes necessary only under the context of procreation,²⁷ and sexual intercourse outside the demand of

²³ Jerome *Letter to Pammachius in Support of the Books against Jovinianus* (NPNF, 6. 67, trans. W. H. Fremantle).

²⁴ John Chrysostom *Homilies on First Corinthians* (NPNF, 12.68, 70, trans. Talbot W. Chambers).

²⁵ Tertullian *To His Wife* (ANF, 4.83, trans. S. Thelwall).

²⁶ Jerome *Letter to Pammachius in Support of the Books against Jovinianus* (NPNF, 6.67).

²⁷ Ambrose *Concerning Virginity* (NPNF, 2-9.472, trans. E. W. Watson and L. Pullan).

procreation is seen as debased. Therefore, between marriage and virginity, the former is good and the latter better. In his succinct comment, Jerome only praises marriage for the reason that it produces virgins.²⁸

It was Jovinian who, almost alone, contended for the equivalence between marriage and virginity. He leveled the two as being on an equal pedestal.²⁹ This view, however, largely departed from the majority view and therefore invited some confrontation. The back clash from Sulpitius Severus, in particular, was insulting enough.³⁰

The meaning of marriage, what it stands for, and why it exists have been explored by many great minds in almost all fields of study, particularly in the domains of philosophy and religion. Interestingly, marriage caught the attention of several of the Church Fathers at a time when many distorted views about marriage were being propagated by some philosophers and gnostics. The church needed people to combat these erroneous views, but unfortunately, several of these views from the church were themselves built on certain philosophical ideas and presuppositions that came from Gnosticism. Marriage was largely viewed as unnecessary unless it was aimed at propagation. Sex became impure, and companionship, which should exist between the sexes, was cast aside. Of course, just as marriage was seriously affected, so was mixed marriage. This will be expanded further in the chapters ahead.

²⁸ Jerome *Letter to Eustochium, on the Preservation of Virginity* (NPNF, 6.30, trans. W. H. Fremantle).

²⁹ Prolegomena to Jerome *The Principal Works of St. Jerome* (NPNF, 6.XX, trans. W. H. Fremantle).

³⁰ Sulpitius Severus *Dialogues* (NPNF, 2-11.43, trans. Alexander Roberts).

Defining Mixed Marriage/Intermarriage

Mixed marriage or intermarriage are words that are interchangeably used to refer to the same thing. It is defined as a marriage that a society considers as having a major difference that calls for concern.³¹

Religious intermarriage, interreligious marriage, and interfaith marriage are also words that can be used interchangeably. They refer to the marriage between persons of different religious persuasions.³² For instance, a marriage where the individual partners belong to different faiths.³³ William and Lawler advance the definition to mean that such marriages are characterized by different religions who consider their member engaged in such marriage as compromising their belief.³⁴

Interchurch marriage may be used interchangeably with Intrafaith marriage. However, they may be slightly different. Intrafaith marriage is a marriage between individuals belonging to the same religion. It is sometimes referred to as interdenominational marriage, which is the marriage between different groups within a particular faith that possess a great deal of peculiarly distinctive faith practices. For example, when Catholics view Protestants as different from them in their beliefs, then marriages between these two groups can be referred to as interdenominational.

³¹ Cavan, "Concepts and Terminology in Interreligious Marriage," 311-320.

³² J. Milton Yinger, "On the Definition of Interfaith Marriage," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 104-107, accessed 20 June 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1385115>.

³³ Harvey J. Locke, Georges Sabagh, and Mary Margaret Thomes, "Interfaith Marriages," *Social Problems* 4, no. 4 (April 1957): 329-333, accessed 20 June 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/799290>.

³⁴ Cavan, "Concepts and Terminology in Interreligious Marriage," 311-320.

Interchurch marriages are marriages between persons of different denominations of the Christian religion. In other words, it is a marriage whereby the individual spouses espouse different denominations of the Christian faith.³⁵ Here, the different groups hold less extensive diverse beliefs and practices.

Endogamy and exogamy are two words of different meanings that together give complete meaning to a marriage concept. Endogamy refers to marriage within a specific group of one's affiliation, while exogamy is a marriage outside one's affiliated group – religious group, ethnic group, tribal group, racial group, etc.³⁶ The wide-ranging meaning of these concepts has led to other precise concepts such as inter-ethnic marriage, interracial marriage, interreligious marriage, same-faith marriage, different faith marriage, homogamy, etc.³⁷ Exogamy may also involve a situation where one of the partners confesses no religious faith.³⁸

It is of critical importance to notice that the scripture views marriage not along the lines of nationality, ethnicity, tribalism, or any identifiable group other than religious idolatry.³⁹ Yilpet affirms that God does not concern Himself about tribalism

³⁵ Lee M. Williams and Michael G. Lawler, "Religious Heterogamy and Religiosity: A Comparison of Interchurch and Same-church Individuals," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 3 (September 2001): 465-478, accessed 18 July 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1388100>.

³⁶ Sewenet, Tessagaye, and Tadele, "Interreligious Marriage," 355-362.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Jonathan Romain, "The Effects of Mixed-faith Marriages on Family Life and Identity," *Journal of Anthropological Society of Oxford* 28, no 3 (1997): 275-95, accessed 21 June 2019, <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:7dfba6d2-8f49-415b-be35-b7480eb3b2a3/files/rs1784m861>.

³⁹ Jiří Moskala, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, ed. Clifford R. Goldstein (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2019), 152.

or racialism in marriage but rather about the belief system of the partners and their object of worship.⁴⁰

Views of Religious Groups on Interfaith Marriage

The first human family intrinsically emerged from the merging of the first two individuals in marriage.⁴¹ Therefore, just as society is born out of family and family out of marriage.⁴² In the same manner, is marriage born out of religion. As designed by the Divine, marriage foreshadowed the beginning of the family and societal life.⁴³ As it were, the first family was the first church.⁴⁴ For as long as the Deity is involved, the religiosity of marriage cannot be a side issue. In other words, the accepted fact that God created marriage makes religion part and parcel of it, for where God's presence is manifested, religion is invariably visible and intricately revealed. And though not without slurred voices of dissension, it is indeed true that the doorstep of marriage is really where religion takes a foothold. Religion has some positive effects on marriage, which include lowering conflict, sustaining happiness, reducing divorce, and improving fertility.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Yoilah Yilpet, "Malachi," *Africa Bible Commentary (ABC)*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1119-1124.

⁴¹ David W. Cloud, *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity*, 6th ed. (2016), s.v. "Marriage."

⁴² Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 108.

⁴³ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History: Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1952), 13.

⁴⁴ C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1985), 318.

⁴⁵ Michael A. Goodman and David C. Dollahite, "How Religious Couples Perceive the Influence of God in Their Marriage," *Review of Religious Research* 48, no. 2 (December 2006): 141-155, accessed 19 June 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20058129>.

Similarities and differences in religions, it is not uncommon for people to adduce the similarities between religions as if there are no critically significant differences which differences are fundamental.⁴⁶ Therefore, just as religions are different, so are their views and understanding about marriage and interfaith marriage. It is almost always certain that when a religion is born, its position to oppose marriage with other faiths is definite, especially if the perpetuity of the religion is a primacy.⁴⁷ In other words, faith requires devotion, which must be kept ablaze; otherwise, it is extinguished and ceases to exist. Therefore, it is incumbent on the founders of the faith that the belief system is such that it discourages engaging other faiths, particularly in marriage matters, and such is the dogmas of the various religions that devotees deviate from when they are thus engaged.⁴⁸

Interreligious marriage in the Hindu caste system, for instance, is almost impregnable prohibited⁴⁹ just as in other religions. Traditionally, the different castes in Hinduism have distinctive lines of difference that are to be respected, which permits no marriages among them.⁵⁰ The Hindu caste system of endogamy seems impregnable for seldom penetration.⁵¹

⁴⁶ David Limbaugh, foreword to *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Book, 2004), 10.

⁴⁷ Cavan, "Concepts and Terminology in Interreligious Marriage," 311-320.

⁴⁸ Sewenet, Tessagaye, and Tadele "Interreligious Marriage," 355-362.

⁴⁹ Kingsley Davis, "Intermarriage in Caste Societies," *American Anthropologist* 43, (1941): 376-395, accessed 07 Oct. 2020, <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1525/aa.1941.43.3.02a00030>.

⁵⁰ S. S. Shani, "Women in Interreligious Marriages: A Case Study in Kerala," *South-Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 4, no. 1 (2017): 2349-7858, accessed 13 April 2020, http://sajms.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/women_in_interreligious_marriages.docx_NEW.pdf.

⁵¹ Davis, "Intermarriage in Caste Societies," 376-395.

In Islam, marriage and service to Allah are two parts of the same path to spiritual perfection.⁵² It is a convention established via love by the consenting parties. In this contract (amidst dissenting views), the general standing order allows Muslim men to marry women in the Christian or Jewish faith alone – people of the book- while Muslim women are not allowed marriage outside the faith.⁵³ The former is done on the condition that the children will be secured as Muslim laws in Islam place the household headship on the male, and he ultimately becomes responsible as the overseer and supervisor of the children and their religious duties.⁵⁴ However, the Jewish or Christian wife may maintain their respective faith regardless.⁵⁵ The aforementioned standard principle guiding the marriage choice of the Muslim emanates from certain Qur’anic verses.⁵⁶

⁵² Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *Marriage and Morals in Islam* (Toronto, Canada: Ansariyan Publications, 2001), 27.

⁵³ Gianluca P. Parolin, “Interfaith Marriages and Muslim Communities in Scotland: A Hybrid Legal Solution?” *Electronic Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Legal Studies* 3 (2015): 83-96, accessed 9 February 2021, <http://www.ejimel.uzh.ch>.

⁵⁴ John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 104.

⁵⁵ Fazlur Rahman, “A Survey of Modernization of Muslim Family Law,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, no. 4 (July 1980): 451-465, accessed 15 June 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/163177>.

⁵⁶ The prominent of these verses are quoted as follows: “Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe: A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe: A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allures you.” Al-Baqara 2:221. “Lawful unto you in marriage are not only chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the people of the Book, revealed before your time, - when ye give them their due dowers” Al-Maeda 5:5. “O ye who believe! When there come to you believing women refugees, examine (and test) them: Allah knows best as to their Faith: if ye ascertain that they are believers, then send them not back to the unbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the unbelievers, nor are they (unbelievers) lawful (husbands) for them. But pay the unbelievers what they have spent (on their dower), and there will be no blame on you if ye marry them on payment of their dower to them. But hold not to the guardianship of unbelieving women” Al-Mumtahina 60:10.

Judaism adores marriage as among the most sacred institutions of life.⁵⁷ Jewish tradition even permits trading a Torah scroll to acquire funds for marriage.⁵⁸ As inscribed in Jewish sacred writings, Judaism prohibits marriages with other religions.⁵⁹ Judaism requires the conversion of the other party before any marriage can proceed.⁶⁰ This marital prohibition against foreigners is observed as a religious duty.⁶¹

Christianity's position on interfaith marriage is not any different from the other religions. It is said that a Christian's marriage to an unbeliever contradicts explicitly what the church teaches.⁶² The decrees of historical councils viciously opposed mixed marriage by their dictats. In the decree of the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 343-381), people outside the Christian faith were heretics who were not allowed any marital arrangement with Christians without conversion or commitment to convert.⁶³ In the decree of the Council of Agatho (A. D. 506), the dictates of the

⁵⁷ Yechiel Eckstein, *How Firm a Foundation: A Gift of Jewish Wisdom for Christians and Jews* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 1997), 136.

⁵⁸ Gail Labovitz, "Marriage and Marriage Customs," *The Cambridge Dictionary of Judaism and Jewish Culture*, ed. Judith R. Baskin (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 411.

⁵⁹ Zalman Abrahamov, *Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State* (Plainsboro, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1976), 183. Sigal argues: "Jews religiously see non-Jews as gentiles, in this perspective, marriage between these two groups is discouraged." Philip Sigal, *The Emergence of Contemporary Judaism*, vol. 1, *The Foundation of Judaism from Biblical Origins to the Sixth Century A.D.*, part 2, ed. Dikran Y. Hadidian (Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1980), 65.

⁶⁰ Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, ed., *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 679.

⁶¹ Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 143.

⁶² B. B. Beach, "Marriage," *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, ed. J.G. Davies (London: SCM Press, 1986), 363.

⁶³ Vimal Tirimanna, ed., *A Few Theological and Pastoral Perspectives on Inter-faith Marriages*, Federation of Asian Bishop's Conferences (FABC), FABC Papers No. 127, PDF file, February 2009, <https://fabc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FABC-Papers-127.pdf>.

Laodicean council were maintained in every way.⁶⁴ In the decree of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), there were interesting changes concerning the prohibited groups mentioned. This time, Jews were cited as people proscribed from marrying Christians.⁶⁵ The import of the Westminster Confession of Faith suggests that it did forbid intermarriage of religions.⁶⁶

Palpably, there is hardly any religion that freely and easily allows marriage and intimate co-mingling of its members with other religions. Though these apparent uncompromising stands by religions are probably done with the right intentions, they have been opposed and challenged consecutively by successive generations, and the twenty-first generation is no exception.

Views of Religious Denominations on Interchurch Marriage

The existence of different denominations within different religions depicts divergent views on important theological issues within the religions. For instance, Christianity has several different denominations, and each of these denominations has its own belief system. No two denominations are exactly alike in their teachings. Every one of these denominations has its understanding and interpretation of some fundamental Christian principles, though not without similarities. These theological

⁶⁴ Tirimanna, *A Few Theological and Pastoral Perspectives on Inter-faith Marriages*, PDF file.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ A. A. Hodge, *The Westminster Confession: A Commentary* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2004), 324.

⁶⁶ This work will focus on the denominations and churches that exist in the Christian religion.

differences inevitably affect how each group views the marriage institution, which ultimately affects how they relate to intrafaith marriage and interfaith marriage.⁶⁷

In the words of Dever, Luther viewed marriage as a right affair in which the church may be called upon to have it blessed once it is already formed. The church may have a say when it is a matter of conscience.⁶⁸ This is not to say that Luther finalized the entire institution of marriage as secularized, but that the civil society and the church have their roles, which may not be collaborative but necessary.⁶⁹

At the time of Emperor Constantinus, his prohibition against Christian-Jewish intermarriage was even strengthened with the death penalty for violators.⁷⁰

The Roman Catholic Church, over the years, has chronicled some stern directives against intrafaith marriage. The Church most severely forbids everywhere marriage between two baptized persons, one of whom is a Catholic and the other a member of a heretical or schismatical sect.⁷¹ These heretical or schismatical sects were denominations other than the Catholic confession. This attitude towards marriages of this nature has been consistent, though with gradual lax over time.⁷² The latest law still forbids marriage between Catholics and other denominations except

⁶⁷ Saunders, "The Gradient of Ecumenism and Opposition to Religious Intermarriage," 107-119.

⁶⁸ Dever, "Marriage," *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 634.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 634.

⁷⁰ Recep Çiğdem, "Interfaith Marriage in Comparative Perspective," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung* 68, no. 1 (2015): 59-86, accessed 21 June 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1556/aorient.68.2015.1.4>.

⁷¹ Tirimanna, "A Few Theological and Pastoral Perspectives of Inter-faith Marriages."

⁷² John Mulhearn, "Interfaith Marriage and Adult Religious Practice," *Sociological Analysis* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 23-31, accessed 20 June, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3709931>.

under the promise of certain conditions and obligations on the part of the Catholic member.⁷³

Conceivably, Christian churches like the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Assemblies of God, and Christ Apostolic Church have similar sentiments surrounding intra-faith marriage. They all seem to have no problem with members marrying themselves. The Presbyterian Church, for instance, does not have any officially documented standard document that must guide members in making decisions of this nature. Members arguably depend on the guiding counsel of their pastors in this kind of marriage decision. Generally, the ministers will have no problem when the groom-to-be or the bride-to-be is a member of any of the above denominations. However, disapproval may come when the choice comes from denominations like Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Similarly, a choice from churches like the Deeper Life Bible Church, Seventh-day Adventist, and Church of Christ may sometimes receive some level of objection, but the resistance for the previous two churches stands strong. For instance, a minister may prefer that his Presbyterian member choose or accept a marriage partner from the Deeper Life Bible Church, Seventh-day Adventist, or Church of Christ than to choose or accept from Jehovah's Witnesses or Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These preferences are based on the doctrinal positions of these churches and how closely the Presbyterian Church can associate its teachings with a particular denomination. Of course, every guidance and counsel that the minister may provide is by 'convention.' The nature of this 'convention' is that pastors and ministers are familiar with these guidelines and procedures, but they are not officially sanctioned by the church as a

⁷³ Tirimanna, "A Few Theological and Pastoral Perspectives of Inter-faith Marriages."

written code. Therefore, it is solely subject to the decision of the person involved, who is not obliged by any reference standard by the church.⁷⁴

The same is true for the Methodist church, Baptist church, the Church of Pentecost, Assemblies of God, Christ Apostolic Church, and Deeper Life Bible Church – they all do not have any strict code of conduct for members who may be involved in intrafaith marriage. The system of these churches generally allows the free will of members to marry among themselves. They consider marriage to be largely a personal decision that the individual has to undertake. They seem to assume that the individual is capable of making the right choice in every aspect of the decision, including the theological aspect. In the case of Jehovah’s Witnesses, marrying within the group is taught as the only permissible practice.⁷⁵

Churches like Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Church of Christ have strong reservations about members marrying from other denominations. In the case of the Church of Christ, a written record that explains their opposing view is rare, however, the verbal tradition is strong enough. Church members understand the choices they have to make.

Inter-Religious Marriage in New Tafo District

The New Tafo District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a cluster of Seventh-day Adventist Churches comprising five churches within the Ashanti Central Conference under the Northern Ghana Union Mission of the West African Division.

⁷⁴ Adjei, interview.

⁷⁴ Benjamin Schlesinger, “Interfaith Marriages: Some Issues,” *Social Science* 43, no. 4 (October 1968): 217-220, accessed 20 June 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41885323>.

⁷⁵ George D. Chryssides, *Historical Dictionary of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Toronto, Canada: The Scarecrow Press, 2008), 90. See also, George D. Chryssides, *The A to Z of Jehovah’s Witnesses* (Toronto, Canada: The Scarecrow Press, 2009), 139.

These five churches are populated as follows: New Tafo SDA Church: about 700 members; Aboabo SDA Church: about 150 members; Tafo Nhyiaeso: about 70 members; Gilead SDA Church: about 100 members; Christ Our Hope SDA Company Church: about 20 members.

The churches of the district suffer from several moral and social challenges within the youth fraternity, the most prevalently troubling one being interchurch marriage. Unfortunately, this is the challenge with potential present distress, future anguish, and lasting regrets and discomfort. The district does not have recorded research data and analysis to testify to the evidence of the problem, however, its visible display in marriages conducted by members is evidence enough. Again, members that visit the Church Board for permission to wed and the inquiries of the Board demonstrate the extent of how members partake in this kind of marriage. The personal record I have from observation and conversion reveals that every year, about three to four members are involved. For about every seven to ten marriages performed in a year, about half are mixed marriages, some of which are personal friends. It is, therefore, a heartfelt desire to reveal the Biblical perspective of these actions.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL ANALYSIS ON MIXED MARRIAGE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This chapter intrinsically analyzes the evidence of marriage and mixed marriage in the OT. The evidence is divided into sections; the first section discusses marriage and its beginning; the second section discusses mixed marriage, and the last section discusses examples of people involved in mixed marriage.

The Divine Foundation of Marriage in the Old Testament

Marriage, according to Bacchiocchi, is not an outcome of societal provision made necessary for the sake of human convenience, instead, it is a human institution instituted by divinity for the benefit of humanity.¹ The partnership of divinity and humanity is symbolically satisfied in marriage. Therefore, the foundation of marriage can only be demonstrated and corroborated in the divinely inspired Scriptures.

To trace the genesis of marriage, one is always required to begin from the beginning. This biblical beginning must always begin with Genesis² – the first book of the biblical canon. Genesis is, by all means, the book of origins.³ It is a document that establishes the divine foundations of almost every biblical doctrine, including

¹ Scott Hahn, ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (2008), s.v. “Marriage.”

² McClintock and Strong, *CBTEL*, s.v. “Marriage.”

³ Brian J. Bailey, *Genesis: The Book of Beginnings* (Waverly, NY: Zion Christian Publishers, 1996), 8.

marriage.⁴ The foundational concept of the Genesis account of marriage cannot be over-emphasized. It forms the formative charter of marriage in every sense.⁵ Just about all Christians understand that marriage is possible because the Lord made it so from the beginning, so that sex has its origin in marriage as the Lord designed it to be.⁶

Of course, Genesis presents marriage not as beginning at the time when Moses penned his creation record,⁷ but as part of creation in progress. The activities of creation as given in the Genesis account concerning marriage predate the time of writing the Scriptures. Within the account of creation is the version of how mankind was brought forth from God (Gen 1:27). Apparently, the creative beginning of humanity is inseparably linked to the creation of marriage. It was through marriage that creation was to continue through the process of procreation. Creation, therefore, inevitably plays a vital role in marriage.⁸

This vital link connecting marriage to creation practically thrives on the nature of mankind as designed and established by God.⁹ The nature of humanity makes opposite sexes not an act of improvisation but an inevitable requirement for the

⁴ Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1980), 10.

⁵ M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (1897), s.v. "Marriage."

⁶ Richard M. Davidson, "Does Marriage Still Matter?" Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, accessed 25 February 2021, <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Does-Marriage-Stillmatter.pdf>.

⁷ The recording of the Genesis record is inspirationally testified as having occurred in the solitude of the Median desert by the fugitive Moses. [Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs, and Prophets*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1890), 251.1]

⁸ William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary (SBD)* (1884), s.v. "Marriage."

⁹ McClintock and Strong, *CBTEL*, s.v. "Marriage."

human being to operate at full capacity.¹⁰ This is why out of the first created person, another was made only to make them one again. Thus, the text of Genesis 1:27 distinguishes the sexes with adjectives of the Hebrew language.¹¹ Animals came forth with the same sexual variances just as the first couples (Gen 1:21, 22), but why would the text draw attention to the sexes of the human, perhaps for their role in the marriage institution?¹² In what seems to be an additional detail to the initial account,¹³ chapter 2 of Genesis makes conspicuous the meaning of the ‘adam’ in the previous chapter.¹⁴ The word clearly reveals the identity of two individuals – male and female.¹⁵ The ‘Adam’ reflects two individuals of different genders – man and woman¹⁶ – and how they relate to each other individually (Gen 2:18, 22). Clearly, the discussion in Genesis 2 describes the first arranged marriage by God for humanity beginning, with the first parents.¹⁷

¹⁰ McClintock and Strong, *CBTEL*, s.v. “Marriage.”

¹¹ “Male and Female” [Gen 1:27], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953), 1:216.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Gerhard F. Hasel, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3,” accessed 22 February 2021.

¹⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 183.

¹⁵ Hasel, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3.”

¹⁶ West-Central Africa Division Biblical Research Committee, *Ordination of Women as Pastors: An Overview of the Major Biblical Arguments*, PDF file, n.d., accessed 20 June 2020, <https://www.adventistarchives.org/west-central-africa-division-brc-report.pdf>.

¹⁷ Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 21. This view is considerably opposed by Gunkel who argues that Genesis should by no means be used to argue in favour of the marriage.

Yet this view is considerably opposed by Gunkel, who argues that Genesis should by no means be used to argue in favour of marriage.¹⁸ But the Hebrew imperfect verb tense (יִצְרֹחַ – ‘he will leave/forsake’) as used in Genesis 2:24 may faithfully be understood as a commanding phrase that sets-up a standard made available for all to follow.¹⁹ This makes marriage a purposeful intention divinely devised to exist for humans to have a share in it.²⁰

Essentially, the one flesh formula of Genesis can be realized in the coming together of the male and female in their bonded union as husband and wife in a marriage.²¹ In Genesis 2:24, we come across the ceremony of the first human beings, whose case serves as a perpetual example for all human sexual practices.²² As if to make a dogmatic declaration,²³ God’s very words in Genesis 2:24²⁴ summarize the nature and paradigmatic significance of the marriage institution.²⁵

¹⁸ Bernard F. Batto, “The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2 and in ‘Atrahasis’” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (October 2000): 621-631, accessed 12 February 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43723879>.

¹⁹ du Preez, “The God-given Marital Mandate: Monogamous, Heterosexual, Intrafaith,” 23-40.

²⁰ Robert B. Lawton, “Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 1 (1986): 97.

²¹ R. C. Ortlund, Jr., “Marriage,” *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 655.

²² Davidson, “Does Marriage Still Matter?”

²³ Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, 19.

²⁴ “Male and Female,” *SDABC*, 1:227.

²⁵ Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, 19. To attribute the words in Genesis 2:24 to God Himself is not an opinion shared by all scholars, some ascribe it to the narrator of Genesis as inspired by God. Charles John Ellicott, *Ellicott’s Bible Commentary in One Volume: A Verse by Verse Explanation*, ed. Donald N. Bowdle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 11. [See also Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 14]. According to Alfred Plummer, those words are the words of Adam and not of God. Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1953), 260. Church fathers like John Chrysostom and Ephrem the Syrian have already credited those words to Adam even in the early days of the church. Thomas C. Oden, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament 1, Genesis 1-11* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 71, 72.

The divine source of those words is undisputed.²⁶ In other words, God's exclusive proprietary of those words is clearly confirmed by the mouth of Christ (Matt 19:4, 5).²⁷ The understanding that those words were divine declarations is extremely important because the words stand out as a divine fiat that authoritatively proclaims the Divine handing over of the marriage institution to humanity. It establishes the marriage institution and literally pronounces the Divine permission allowing mankind the license to partake of it. It launches a perpetuity model that should bind everyone who wants to benefit from the marriage union. Therefore, Genesis 2:18-25 justifiably presents evidence in defense of the biblical background and origin for marriage.²⁸

Commenting on Genesis 2:18-25, Kidner explains that God Himself stood in as the father of both to seal the marriage and set an example.²⁹ Evidently, what happened between God and the first duo of individuals, as well as the interaction between them, is what forms the basis for what many scholars consider as the beginning of marriage.

At that holy matrimony, God, though the father of both, is visualized as presenting the bride to the groom at a wedding ceremony. Accordingly, we can correctly say that it was the divine idea that brought about marriage.³⁰ On this

²⁶ E. F. Kevan "Genesis," *The New Bible Commentary*, ed. F. Davidson, 2nd ed. (London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1954), 79.

²⁷ "For This Cause" [Matt 19:5], *SDABC*, 5:453.

²⁷ Tremper Longman III, ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2013), s.v. "Marriage."

²⁸ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 74.

²⁹ Olthuis, "Marriage," *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 408.

³⁰ Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman III, *DBI*, s.v. "Marriage."

premise, Mueller cannot be clear enough in saying that the beginning of marriage is known, and it is by God.³¹

What is expressed in Genesis 2:24 stands as an undisputed fact. Davidson observes:

The man is to be ‘joined’ to his wife... In Gen 2 it clearly indicates a covenant context, i.e., a mutual commitment of the couple expressed as marriage vows in a formal covenant ceremony, paralleling the ‘oath of solidarity’ and language of ‘covenant partnership’ expressed by Adam to Eve in the presence of Yahweh as witness and officiant at their wedding.³²

Conclusively, the divine design of marriage is conspicuously evidenced in scripture, and to deny it is to deny the obvious. Assuredly, “Marriage is set forth as a permanent covenant bond between husband and wife, solemnized with a covenant oath between spouses witnessed by God Himself as well as humans.”³³

The Hebrew Concept of Marriage

Looking at how the marriage institution appears particularly distinctive even from the beginning of scripture, it is strange to observe that the Hebrew canon is devoid of a single peculiar word set apart to describe marriage.³⁴ The comprehensive

³¹ Ekkehardt Mueller, “The Gift of Sexuality,” Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, accessed 23 January 2021, <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Gift-of-Sexuality.pdf>.

³² Davidson, “Does Marriage Still Matter?”

³³ Richard M. Davidson, “Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Old Testament Foundations and New Testament Implications,” Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, accessed 25 February 2021, <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/articles/marriage-divorce-and-remarriage-old-testament-foundations-and-new-testament-implications>. “In the Bible marriage is the primal human bond of society, the foundation of social life. Prior to a society there must be families, and before family there exists a marriage.” Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman III, *DBI*, s.v. “Marriage.”

³³ Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman III, *DBI*, s.v. “Marriage;” Shani, “Women in Interreligious Marriages,” 2349-7858, argues “Marriage is one of the most important social institutions in our society and has been integrally linked to religion and religious values. Further, the institution of family too is organized around religion thereby making all the three institutions inseparably connected.”

³⁴ Sigal, *The Emergence of Contemporary Judaism*, vol. 1, *The Foundation of Judaism from Biblical Origins to the Sixth Century A.D.*, part 2, 61.

concept of marriage is reflected in a variety of words, of which sanctification is foundational. Rabbi Eckstein explains that the word for marriage in Hebrew is *kiddushin*, which calls attention to sanctification that subsists in consecrated separation.³⁵ The Hebrew word לָלַךְ, which is translated in the KJV to mean to be given in marriage (Ps 78:63) may also mean other things, including to shine, to boast, to celebrate, commend, glory, be worthy of praise, etc.³⁶

It appears the words used to describe the idea of marriage in the Hebrew language is very diverse, however the word נָתַן – to give in marriage – is typical. It generally refers “to contract affinity by marriage: —join in affinity, father in law, make marriages, mother in law, son in law.”³⁷

It seems of the various technical words, the Hebrew noun קַדְוִיָּה succinctly represents the form that seems to define marriage restrictively. It means marriage or wedding. Another term that seemingly describes marriage is לָקַח. This Hebrew verb, which means to take, can also mean to be taken in marriage. Alongside the aforementioned words is the word נָשָׂא, which can assume several meanings, including to engage for marriage, betroth, to meet, to summon, to gather, etc.³⁸ Another word worthy of notice is עוֹנָה (Exod 21:10), which means live together with sex involved.³⁹ Another word to consider is שָׂא, its related meaning includes: to be betroth, to have the approval to marry, to ask for the hand of a woman in marriage.⁴⁰

³⁵ Yechiel Eckstein, *How Firm a Foundation: A Gift of Jewish Wisdom for Christians and Jews* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 1997), 138.

³⁶ James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible; with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version* (1890), s.v. “Hālāl.”

³⁷ Ibid., s.v. “Chathan.”

³⁸ Ibid., s.v. “Yā’ad.”

³⁹ Ibid., s.v. “Ōwnāh.”

⁴⁰ Jeff A. Benner, *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible: Hebrew Letters, Words and Roots Defined within Their Ancient Cultural Context* (2005), s.v. “aras.” It is translated as betroth three times in the Authorized Version; Deuteronomy 28:30, Hosea 2:19, 20.

It seems the Hebrews looked at marriage in such a high esteem that a single word was hardly used to express all the goodness that it holds. Notwithstanding, they viewed marriage as an institution that brings people together in a special way that only divinity could have imagined.

Inter-Religious Marriage in the Pentateuch

From the chronological beginning of the Bible are the first five books of Moses in the order of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These five books are theologically denoted as the Pentateuch or Torah. In these books is the reminiscence of the religious motive undergirded with the divine blueprint that must chaperon the marriage institution.

Fortified in this religious motive for marriage is the divine directive that forbids the co-mingling of the then-existing religions under the motivation of marriage. This divine derision towards interfaith marriage demands a barrier between the merging of religions together on marriage terms. This divine demand barred the worshipers of Yahweh from marrying the worshippers of other deities. The right of Jehovah to command such demands from His subjects is grounded in the fact that He created marriage.

The Marriage Principle of Unity in Separation

It is the Divine command that originally rolled out the marriage institution for the first parent and then permitted it for posterity use in Genesis 2:24. Adam Clarke's assertion that the words of Genesis 2:23, 24 are actually marriage ceremonial words.⁴¹

⁴¹ Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (New York: Wesleyan Heritage Publications, 1998), 35.

is persuasive. They must also be the very codes that guide marriage.⁴² They are words of the law that lay out the marital scheme for all generations beginning from Adam and Eve.⁴³ This act of union that comes out of separation and engulfs both the physical and the spiritual is particularly emblematic in the verbs used in the text of Genesis 2:24 – forsake and cleave. Hamilton identifies these verbs in the verse as being of critical importance.⁴⁴ The verb *forsake* often has a covenant context when Israel breaks its covenant with God, while the verb *cling* often designates upholding the covenant.⁴⁵

The verb translated as forsake is the Hebrew word עָרַב. Most translations render the word as ‘leave.’ However, more than what the word may mean, to relinquish.⁴⁶ It signifies to leave without restraint and be committed to another.⁴⁷ It indicates, to cut loose, to leave off one’s kindness, to withdraw one’s favour from anyone ... to quit, to desert⁴⁸ someone and be committed or entrusted to another.⁴⁹

⁴² Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Judges and Ruth*, Ariel’s Bible Commentary (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2008), 87.

⁴³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 38.

⁴⁴ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 185, 186.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 185, 186.

⁴⁶ Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible*, “Azab.”

⁴⁷ Samuel Lee, *Lexicon, Hebrew, Chaldee, and English* (1840), s.v. “azab.”

⁴⁸ William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Including the Biblical Chaldee* (GR), trans. from the Latin of William Gesenius by Edward Robinson, 23rd ed., (1882), s.v. “azab.”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Concurrently, the verb generally translated as ‘cleave, join, stick’⁵⁰ is the Hebrew word דָּבַק. It may denote to “cleave (fast together), follow close (hard after), be joined (together), keep (fast)...pursue hard.”⁵¹ It may mean “to adhere with firmness as with glue, to be glued.”⁵² As it were, “the modern Hebrew word for glue comes from this word.”⁵³ Clearly, to cleave requires complete closeness as “bone to skin ... hand to sword ... girdle to loins ... tongue to the roof of mouth,”⁵⁴ or better still, “remaining physically close, as skin to flesh and flesh to bone.”⁵⁵ Beyond sticking together to be glued, other words of the same root even connote “soldering of metals”⁵⁶ or “welding of metals.”⁵⁷ In a sense, the couple is merged into absolute singleness. This unity is unique in that it affects every aspect of the individuals involved, so that each is involved in the personal life of the other and in a personal way.

⁵⁰ Brown, BDB, s.v. “*dabaq*.” The word may be translated to mean – stick, join, soldering, abide, keep. [Benner, *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible*, s.v. “*dabaq*.”]. The word is used about 13 times in the Torah. In the KJV, it refers to cleave for about 9 times (Gen 2:24; 34:3; Deut 10:20, 11:22, 13:4, 17, 28:21, 60, 30:20), it also refers to take or overtake (Gen 19:19, 31:23) or keep (Num 36:7,9). In Gen 2:24; the man and woman must cleave together, in Gen 34:3; the soul of Shechem (the Hivite) cleave unto Dinah (daughter of Jacob), in Deut 10:20, 11:22, 13:4, 30:20; Israelites are to cleave to the Lord, otherwise upon cleaving to evil (Deut 13:17), Pestilence and disease will cleave unto them (Deut 13:17, 28:60). In relationships (whether it is between persons or people and God), the word describes two persons who must be knit together or where one is affectionally attached to the other with an emotional feeling that will not let go. This is exemplified in Ruth 1:14, where Ruth was cleaved to Naomi so that nothing could separate them (Ruth 1:16-17).

⁵¹ Strong, “*Azab*,” *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible*, 27.

⁵² Gesenius, GR, s.v. “*dabaq*.”

⁵³ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Judges and Ruth*, 88.

⁵⁴ Brown, BDB, s.v. “*dabaq*.”

⁵⁴ Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 85.

⁵⁵ Gesenius, GR, s.v. “*dabaq*.”

⁵⁶ Samuel Lee, *Lexicon, Hebrew, Chaldee, and English* (1840), s.v. “*dabaq*.”

⁵⁷ Gesenius, GR, s.v. “*dabaq*.”

Calvin explains that the cleaving of a husband to a wife is a consecrated affair that the society upholds⁵⁸ as if to uphold a covenant. Clearly, this merging of the two persons goes beyond the sharing of sexual intimacy.⁵⁹ As a covenant language,⁶⁰ its recognizance is established in the presence of God, who inevitably becomes a perpetual part of the union.⁶¹ Cassuto explains that this cleaving only referred to their sexual relationship in part. Its fullest meaning concerns their “spiritual relationship.”⁶² In other words, the two individuals are clung together by a physical bond and in the fullest sense have the same spiritual identity. According to C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, the marital union of the male and female is both physical and spiritual oneness.⁶³ Seeing that the nature of what it means to ‘cleave’ definitely extends beyond the physical,⁶⁴ the reality of cleaving must require that both have the same deity they devotedly worship. As far as possible, their sharing faculties should know no bounds.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. John King (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 136.

⁵⁹ Jacques B. Doukhan, *Genesis*, Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary (Hagerstown, MD: Pacific Press, Review and Herald, 2016), 85.

⁶⁰ Ángel M. Rodríguez et al., *Andrews Bible Commentary* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2010), 7.

⁶¹ Doukhan, *Genesis*, 86.

⁶² Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis (Part 1): From Adam to Noah*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Skokie, IL: Varda Books, 2005), 291.

⁶³ C. F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 90.

⁶⁴ Kenneth O. Gangel and Stephen Bramer, *Genesis*, Holman Old Testament Commentary, ed. Max Anders (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing Group, 2002), 30.

⁶⁵ Barnabé Assohoto and Samuel Ngewa, “Genesis,” *ABC*, 56.

The facet of this all-inclusive endeavor is revealed in the ‘one flesh’ terminology, which primarily refers to the couple’s sexual union⁶⁶ Genesis 2:24, and its choice of words seemingly reveals in sequential order the substantive stages from the beginning to the end of how the marriage contract is covenanted and consummated.⁶⁷ Therefore, how will it suffice for anyone to sever this union by spiritual incompatibility through interreligious marriage, seeing that the spiritual compatibility of marriage stability is inevitable? In the words of Ron du Preez, the pattern outlined in the scripture ensures that ethics and religious practice are not in conflict.⁶⁸ Davidson assures that in Eden, the design for marriage was such that the partners are together in the practice of their faith.⁶⁹

Miscegenation of the ‘Sons of God and Daughters of Men’

In the message of Genesis chapter 6 are the words that demonstrate the marital mingling of two groups of different and distinct religious affiliations. Unfortunately, these verses are among the most challenging verses in the book of Genesis.⁷⁰ It has received several scholarly views and expositions. Whatever it is, we are still

⁶⁶ Richard M. Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1-2,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 5-21, accessed 23 February 2021, http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/OTeSources/01-Genesis/Text/Articles-Books/Davidson_SexGen1_AUSS.htm.

⁶⁷ René Gehring, “The Biblical ‘One Flesh’ Theology of Marriage as Constituted in Genesis 2:24: An Exegetical Study of This Human-divine Covenant Pattern, Its New Testament Echoes, and Its Reception History throughout Scripture Focusing on the Spiritual Impact of Sexuality” (PhD diss., Avondale College, 2011), 25, accessed 1 February 2021.

⁶⁸ du Preez, “The God-given Marital Mandate: Monogamous, Heterosexual, Intrafaith,” 23-40.

⁶⁹ Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 316. These significant values may be a common value shared by the couple which is as a result of the common identity from the newly form union. These values may ideally not be formed by a care free society devoid of morally but formed according to God’s moral standard and enshrined in the boundaries of divine will.

⁷⁰ James McKeown, *Genesis*, The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 58.

confronted here with verses that stand out as yet another step in the gradual progression of mankind's depravity in sin and evil.⁷¹

With regard to the 'sons of God and daughters of men,' some commentators have argued that the sons of God are beings beyond the sphere of the human domain who may be angels⁷² or some kind of celestial men or messengers, while the daughters of men are humanity in general. Keil and Delitzsch demand the outright dismissal of this view as unbiblical.⁷³ Proponents of this view seemingly fail to follow the contextual flow of the text in its pericope, and in the process, they sideline the context. Therefore, in pretext, they employ context in other parts of the Scriptures to interpret this text.⁷⁴

According to Ellicott, the sons of God were considered upper-class nobles, perhaps aristocrats by Jewish theologians.⁷⁵ Other commentators consider the sons of God as the descendants of Seth, who, before they sinned, have upheld godliness in higher esteem, while the daughters of men were the morally debased descendants of

⁷¹ Kidner, *Genesis*, 96.

⁷¹ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 292. See also [Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 226, 228. MacArthur strongly affirms that "the passage puts strong emphasis on the angelic versus human contrast" [John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 21]. Among the objections to this view is the enquiries; 1) the Genesis account in nowhere even hints on angels with debase behaviour. The angelic references depict angels always sent by God. 2) why will the writer cease to use the common term for angels 'messengers of God' or 'messengers of the Lord.' [Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 292]. 3) This view approbates some mythological language to the Genesis account. It assumes the identity of beings outside the lineage of Adam (Gen 5:3, Acts 17:26). [Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers), 2008].

⁷² Kyle M. Yates, "Genesis," *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary (WBC)*, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1962), 12.

⁷³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *Pentateuch*, 128.

⁷⁴ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5A, *Matthew-Luke* (New York: Abingdon, 1966), 67. See also Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 237-239.

⁷⁵ Ellicott, *Ellicott's Bible Commentary*, 21.

Cain.⁷⁶ The next view reverses the identification of the previous view. It describes the sons of God as the Cainites and the daughters of men as the Sethites and asserts that their amalgamation was a sexual union between the Sethites and the Cainites.⁷⁷ Another view also challenges the source of the account and suggests the source as a Canaanite folklore. As a myth, it perfectly fits in with the union of humans and deities.⁷⁸ Though the views may be different, the reasons for the various views are twofold – one is anchored in the contextual structure and the flow of the narration as it unfolds, even beginning from Genesis 4, and the other is based on records of antiquities and how people of old have explained it.

Davidson laconically avers the most persuasive view with these words:

several persuasive recent studies have reviewed the various interpretations and provided cogent evidence that the ‘Sethite’ . . . interpretation of the ‘sons of God’ . . . best fits the literary context and overall flow of the book of Genesis. The ‘Sethite’ interpretation sees the ‘sons of God’ as the godly line of Seth, intermarrying with women from the ungodly line of Cain, who are called ‘daughters of men.’”⁷⁹

Accordingly, as John Calvin has observed, the *sons of God* refer to those obedient to God while the daughters of men refer to those disobedient to the Lord, characterized by the descendants of Seth and the descendants of Cain, respectively.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2005), 329.

⁷⁷ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 252.

⁷⁸ R. N. Whybray, “Genesis,” *The Oxford Bible Commentary (OBC)*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 45, 46.

⁷⁹ Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 182.

⁸⁰ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 237, 238.

Matthew Henry defends this view and describes the line of Seth as those who are devoted to religion and the line of Cain as those who reject religious piety.⁸¹ According to Calvin, the Sethites desecrated the most sacred instructions that established a separation between them and the Cainites.⁸²

In harmony with this plauditing view is the datum that the conjugal union between the two groups is an interreligious marriage, where a believer and an unbeliever unequally join together.⁸³ This kind of miscegenation is implicit in the words of Genesis 2:24; otherwise, how could it have been the basis for judgment and destruction underpinned by the almost complete overhaul of the human race? The marital mingling of two religiously different individuals almost always guarantees the fallout of the godly rather than the ungodly. The general acceptance of this behaviour made divine judgment inevitable.

Chronicles of Patriarchs Involved in Mixed Marriages

The Marriage of Rebecca to Isaac

The marriage of Rebecca to Isaac is one of the most wonderful love stories detailed in the Bible. Sometimes, we do wonder why Abraham insisted on going back to his roots for a wife for Isaac, his son (Gen 24:3-4, 37-38, 40). Though the reason for Abraham's action is not explicit in Genesis,⁸⁴ yet, he possibly knew that the

⁸¹ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Deuteronomy*, 82, 83.

⁸² R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1, *Old Testament* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 21.

⁸³ Ellicott, *Ellicott's Bible Commentary*, 36. Ellicott explains that "Ur was the special seat of the worship of the moon-god, Sin" [Ellicott, *Ellicott's Bible Commentary*, 36].

⁸⁴ R. W. L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 208.

remnant of his father's family who remained still possessed a partial knowledge of the Lord he served and worshipped. Therefore, Abraham, as if confronted with the choice between the lesser of two evils, refused the choice of total evil. He refused a marriage tie with the Canaanites with an oath while he still dwells among them (Gen 24: 2, 37). In other words, Abraham wanted to set a cause that put a barrier between the marriage of believers and unbelievers.⁸⁵ Isaac, as a believer, must not be yoked with the unbelieving Canaanites.⁸⁶ He was to remain separated from such groups earmarked for destruction for their gruesome behavior, religion, and practices.

Logically, this beautiful story of a journey in search of a bride was a result of a father who chose to take no chance but to reject the mingling of two immiscible religions for the sake of posterity.⁸⁷ Obviously, the particularities surrounding the demands of Abraham cannot be without religious motives.⁸⁸ Abraham understood the effect of interreligious marriage and prevented it at all costs.

The Marriage of Esau and Jacob

In Genesis 26:34, Esau married Judith and Bashemath, both from different Hittite families. This marriage of Esau deeply troubled his parents, Isaac and Rebecca (Gen 26:35). The marriage not in line with the family line fell outside the family lineage and therefore not in line with the purpose of the call of Abraham. Isaac clearly understood that kind of matrimony as an interreligious marriage and a betrayal of revered principles.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Assohoto and Ngewa, "Genesis," 121.

⁸⁶ Victor P. Hamilton, "Genesis," *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 55.

⁸⁷ Ellicott, *Ellicott's Bible Commentary*, 53.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

It was, therefore, his strongest desire that Jacob engage not the daughters of the Canaanites (Gen 28:1). By a charge, he urged his son to take the journey (similar to the one taken on his behalf) for the search of a wife (Gen 28:2). The challenge is that, while Abraham would strongly reject the request of Isaac being sent to Padan Aram (Gen 24:5-6, 8), Isaac rather allows his son to go there. His wish for Jacob to marry there was clearly spelled out for his son.⁹⁰ It seems Isaac never forgot his father's demand in marriage matters. Possibly, Abraham's reason for the choice of wife for him reminded him of his duty to follow the same, or perhaps he had come to understand its critical importance. He, too, had decided to reject the marital mingling of his family with the Canaanites based on religious reasons.

The Marriage of Judah

So far, some parts of the Abrahamic lineage have kept the legacy of marrying according to the preferred pattern. Apart from Esau, one other decenter who married among the Canaanites was Judah (the fourth son of Jacob) and his brother Simeon (Gen 38: 1,2; 1 Chr 2:3; Gen 46:10; Exod 6:15; 1 Chr 4:24).⁹¹

The Marriage of Joseph

Another Abrahamic descendant who also sidetracked on the prescribed marriage pattern was Joseph. As a stranger in a strange land who is surprised by the king's favour, he refused not the marriage offer of the king of Egypt (Gen 41:45). By his acceptance, Joseph became a partaker of interreligious marriage, having received

⁸⁹ Ellicott, *Ellicott's Bible Commentary*, 58.

⁹⁰ Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 77.

⁹¹ Sarah Shectman, "Themes and Perspectives in Torah: Creation, Kinship, and Covenant," in *The Pentateuch: Fortress Commentary on the Bible Study Edition*, ed. Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., Matthew J. M. Coomber (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2016), 80.

the daughter of a priest. This arranged marriage of Joseph was an inter-religious marriage between the religion of Joseph and the religion of Pharaoh (Gen 41: 38, 39).

The Marriage of Moses

After delivering the seven daughters of Reuel at the well (Exod 2:16, 17),⁹² the adopted run-away prince of Egypt later married one of them named Zipporah (Exod 2:21). Zipporah was the daughter of a Midian priest⁹³ (Exod 2:16) who was conceivably the priest of the Most High God (Exod 18:9-12, 19, 21, 23).⁹⁴ Moses may have noticed the rightness of this marriage considering their origin as Midianites.⁹⁵ Obviously, having stayed with them (Exod 2:21b), he observed no difference between the deity they both worship. Nevertheless, Moses will later be criticized by his older siblings for this marriage (Num 12: 1). While some scholars consider the Ethiopian woman as different from Zipporah, a rather persuasive contrary comment argues the reference to Zipporah as a Cushite is just racially motivated, it seeks to mock her skin colour as a Midianite comparing it to Ethiopians.⁹⁶ In Hamilton's view, Moses's marriage constitutes an exogamy.⁹⁷ This view is also expressed by some

⁹² Reuel also bore the name Jethro (Exod 18:1, 5, 6, 12). "Reuel means friend of God" [Philip C. Johnson, "Exodus," *WBC*, 54] or "'God is friend.'" [J. C. Connell "Genesis," *The New Bible Commentary*, 2nd ed., ed. D. Davidson (London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1954), 109]. He is the same person referred to as Raguel the Midianite (Num 10:29).

⁹³ The Midian's are descendants of Abraham. They are the offspring of Midian, probably the fourth son of Keturah; the second wife of Abraham (Gen 25: 1, 2; 1 Chr 1: 32, 33). [See Kevan "Genesis," 95].

⁹⁴ Connell, "Genesis," 109.

⁹⁵ Ellicott, *Ellicott's Bible Commentary*, 91.

⁹⁶ Roy E. Gane, "Numbers," *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 191.

⁹⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus, An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 82.

contemporary Jews who still insist on Moses' marriage as interfaith.⁹⁸ But it seems the shortcomings of this view are glaring. Hence, we may persuasively consider Moses' marriage as out of the confederation of interfaith marriage or forbidden marriage.⁹⁹

Establishing the Principle of Mixed Marriage

The text in Exodus 34:16 seems primal for actuating an explicit command against intermarriage.¹⁰⁰ Here, the Israelites are barred from engaging the Canaan inhabitants on the grounds of worship and intermarriage.¹⁰¹ After breaking the first two tablets of the Ten Commandments (Exod 32:19), God's instruction to Moses was that another two tablets of stone be prepared (Exod 34:1, NKJV). This smashing of the first tablet represented the breaking of the recent covenant between God and Israel.¹⁰² The quest to produce another law accompanied another covenant, along with its restated conditions with some stern add-ons (Exod 34:10-26).¹⁰³

After spelling out the conditions, the concluding words to Moses were that the words of the covenant be written down as a witness. (Exod 34:27). Portions of the

⁹⁸ Scott M. Langston, *Exodus through the Centuries*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 38.

⁹⁹ "Ethiopian Woman" [Num 12:1], *SDABC*, 1:861. Some scholars suggest that this Ethiopian woman was a new wife of Moses after the death of Zipporah. [See Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 199].

¹⁰⁰ U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1951), 444.

¹⁰¹ Thomas B. Dozeman, "Exodus," *Fortress Commentary on the Bible: The Old Testament and Apocrypha*, ed. Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., and Matthew J. M. Coomber (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 170.

¹⁰² Ibid. See also Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 634.

¹⁰³ Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 442.

covenantal conditions required the people to destroy all the articles of pagan worship as well as to sever all ties and inclinations towards heathenism with a strong ban against marriage bonds (Exod 34:13-16).¹⁰⁴ Without these, was the possibility of liaison with the pagans¹⁰⁵ and the tendency to intermarry among them. Though the critical concern of the text, as expressed by the Lord, is that carelessness could lead to a covenant between the two parties so that intermarriage could ensue as the result of the alliance.¹⁰⁶ In other words, these two actions have the potential threat to lure parents and children into paganism (Exod 34:16). The nature of the conjugal ensnarement is that:

The indigenous population in the land will entrap Israel, not least by mixed marriages with all the religious and theological compromises that these marriages require. An oath before the deities of the contracting parties as witnesses and sanction would be integral to such covenants. The ceremony might involve sacrifice at a shared altar and participation in a common meal as part of these sacrifices.¹⁰⁷

Later on, speaking to the people of Israel in the plains of the Moabites, Moses literally rehearsed to the hearing of the people all that they had been through (Deut 1:1). In a farewell message, Moses strongly admonished the Israelites to stay distinctly from the other nations (Deut 7:6). By this, he meant a complete partition between them both, particularly in worship and in marriage (Deut 7:3-5).¹⁰⁸ By

¹⁰⁴ William Johnstone, *Exodus 20-40*, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2014), 411.

¹⁰⁵ Carol Meyers, "Exodus," *The New Cambridge Bible Commentary*, ed. Ben Witherington III (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 265.

¹⁰⁶ Daniel M. Gurtner, *Exodus: A Commentary on the Greek Text of Codex Vaticanus*, Septuagint Commentary Series (Boston, MA: Brill, 2013), 468.

¹⁰⁷ Johnstone, *Exodus 20-40*, 411.

¹⁰⁸ Paul N. Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1993), 94, 95, 112.

marriage, he forbade the marital union between an Israelite daughter and a Canaanite son or an Israelite son and a Canaanite daughter (Deut 7:3). This supposedly unfriendly endogamic¹⁰⁹ demand was by no means grounded on any ethnic sentimentalism. The reason is purely religious: “For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods (Deut 7:4, KJV).” This clear prohibition was in every way against inter-religious marriage between worshippers of two different deities.

Mixed Marriage in the Historical Books

In the historical books of the Old Testament Canon are chronicles of mixed marriages that are relevant for this research. In Judges 3:5-7, there is a clear play-out of the people’s response to the intermarriage ban. The text summarizes what was a rather sad violation of a repeated command for abstinence from the people of the land.¹¹⁰ The Israelites actively mingled with the Canaanites both socially and conjugally (Judg 3:5-7, NKJV). This text seems to summarize what was rather a sad disregard of a repeated prohibition.

The Marriage of Samson

At the beginning of his assigned calling, Samson started with a mixed marriage, which continued (Judg 14:1-2, 15:1, 2). His parents knew the dangers of this kind of marriage and advised him accordingly, but it appears beauty overruled reasoning and strength overcame counsel (Judg 14:3). In a proper sense, “he is a

¹⁰⁹ Russell Fuller, “Marriage,” *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Manhattan, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), 496, 497.

¹¹⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Judges and Ruth*, 49.

headstrong youth whose passions are so inflamed by what his eyes see that they blind him to all reason and duty.”¹¹¹

Throughout his career and in carrying out his appointed task, it was never recorded at any point that he related to any woman from Israel. The next woman to get his attention was another Philistine prostitute from Gaza (Judg 16:1). The last woman to finally seal the faith of Samson for the worse outcome was another Philistine from the Valley of Sorek (Judg 16:4).¹¹² She collaborated with the Philistines to destroy Samson.

Samson’s marital relations may not be an explicit religious issue; however, its implicit religious undertone cannot be overshadowed. By his birth and life, Samson existed as a representative of God in strength to judge and deliver Israel from her enemies (Judg 13:5, 7). The Spirit of God operated over him because he was living by the dictates of God’s instructions (Judg 13:24, 25). Therefore, any conjugal relation outside Israel that had the potential to lure him from his allegiance to God was a mixed marriage. As it were, the conquering of Samson was the conquering of the Deity he represented (Judg 16:23, 24). It is baffling why the record of Samson’s twenty years as a judge over Israel is perhaps centered on his illicit love affairs. The

¹¹¹ Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 352. Sometimes, the expression “it was of the Lord” (Judg. 14:4) is explained in approval to the actions of Samson. The words of Davis and Whitcomb better explain the verse: “The parents of Samson did not realize that even this evil act on the part of their son was included in God’s perfect plan and would be utilized by Him.” John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb, *Israel from Conquest to Exile: A Commentary on Joshua-2 Kings* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1970), 135. We cannot credit this expression to the foreknowledge of Samson because the only reason he gives is that “she pleaseth me well.” In other words, while the Lord did not occasion the evil act, His benevolence worked through the failures and weaknesses of the disobedient for the benefit of His people. In any case, this expression continues with, “that he sought an occasion against the Philistines.” The outcome of the marriage which largely fulfills this end result is when the marriage fails (Judg 14: 20, 15:1-5) and Samson’s anger leads to the destruction of the Philistine’s farms which leads to a series of battles with them (Judg 15). Therefore, from the writer’s perspective, the expression “it was of the Lord”, may refer to the fact that his parents did not know that God had occasioned the failure of the Marriage to the disadvantage of the Philistines.

¹¹² Ibid., 384.

story was probably recorded as a lesson to teach the reality of the words of Moses (Deut 7:3, 4) in the person of the strongest man of all time.

The Marriage of the Sons of Naomi and the Women of Moab

Ruth travels to a Moabite's land with her family to escape famine. The two sons of Ruth (Mahlon and Chilion) later intermarried to Moabite's women (Orpah and Ruth) (Ruth 1:4). At the time of her return, Ruth chose to cleave to her (Ruth 1:14) even to death (Ruth 1:17). She was ready to become an Israelite in all aspect of life, including abandoning her gods for the God of Israel (Ruth 1:6). This dedicated devotion of Ruth sometimes generates the question of whether the marriage was interfaith. Even Orpah, at some point, was ready to join the Israelite community (Ruth 1:7, 10).

In this case, we possibly have a clear scenario of 'intermarriage evangelism.' Perhaps the influence of the social and spiritual life of Naomi's family was the transforming impact on the two pagan women. The spiritual devotion of Naomi is evidenced in her utterances. She sees the hand of God in all her life endeavors and the name of God is often featured in her conversation (Ruth 1:8, 9, 13, 20, 21; 2:20). It may therefore be inferred that the two in-laws of Naomi came into the knowledge of the God of Israel from Naomi's family and even adopted the family's faith.¹¹³ This event mostly resonates well with people who are involved in intermarriage and have purposed to change the faith of their partners.

Assuredly, there are morally upright people even among the heathens (Ruth 1:8, 12). The testimony of Naomi and Boaz reveals the godly character of the two

¹¹³ R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1961), 1201.

Moabite women (Ruth 1:8, 2:11, 3:11). However, the acknowledged godly character of the unbeliever may not justify breaking a direct divine instruction. As it is, the divine command is not explicit about the character of the ‘unbeliever’ or the ‘believer.’ It just assumes the character of a person through the worship system. The Lord’s concern is centered on the spirituality of the individual through the deity of worship.

We are not told whether the women were converted before they were married. Otherwise, the application of interfaith marriage to these marriages would fail under the condition of conversion before marriage because the biblical application of interfaith marriage is not based on ethnicity or country of origin but the affiliation of one’s faith.¹¹⁴ However, conversion after marriage renders it interfaith, yet it would make it an ideal inspiration to those who wish to have the same experience in their interfaith marriage.¹¹⁵

The Marriage of Solomon

Assuredly, the father of Solomon (David) had an equal share in intermarriage (2 Sam 3:3). In the preliminary period of his reign, Solomon similarly failed to comply with the command of Moses in his marital matters¹¹⁶ even as he was instructed to keep the charge of the Lord (Cf. 1 Kgs 2:1-3). He married the daughter of Pharaoh as a proviso to consummate his irenic alliance with him (1 Kgs 3:1).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Moskala, “Ezra and Nehemiah,” 152.

¹¹⁵ Çiğdem, “Interfaith Marriage in Comparative Perspective,” 59-86.

¹¹⁶ Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary 8 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995), 97.

¹¹⁷ Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 85.

With this marriage, Solomon made one fundamental mistake, which signifies a deliberate decision to depart from a practical norm.¹¹⁸ As if this was not cadence enough, at the apogee of his power, he affectionately harmonized with the women of the forbidden nations (1 Kgs 11:1-3, NKJV). The result is the augury; just as the Lord had warned through Moses, Solomon's heart was influenced into following other gods (1 Kgs 11:4, NKJV).

The Marriage of Ahab

Having become the king of the Northern part of the kingdom of Israel, Ahab joined the kings who decided to default in God's command by engaging in mixed marriage.¹¹⁹ He married Jezebel, "the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians" (1 Kgs 16:31). She greatly influenced the king into serving and worshiping Baal, and indeed he instigated a national apostasy (1 Kgs 18:17, 18). Ahab built a house for Baal worship and raised in it an altar for sacrifice (1 Kgs 16:32).

The Marriage of Esther and Ahasuerus

By divine grace, Esther became the queen instead of Vashti (Esth 2:17).¹²⁰ By her position as the queen of Persia and Media through her marriage to Ahasuerus, she became another Israelite to be involved in intermarriage.

¹¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings*, Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2014), 45.

¹¹⁹ Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, 225.

¹²⁰ The command not to intermarry was not about nationalism but about idolatry...the issue with intermarriage in these commands concerns marrying someone who is of a different faith or of no faith. [Moskala, "Ezra and Nehemiah," 152]

Mixed Marriage at the Time of Ezra

The details given about the people involved in mixed marriage at the time of Ezra are revealing – the people, priests, Levites, leaders, and rulers (Ezra 9:1,2), and even names of some of the perpetrators (Ezra 10:18-44).

The people seem to pursue the abominations of the surrounding Canaanite nations.¹²¹ The nature of the abominations is not revealed, but the propelling reason for engaging in the abominable is visible in Ezra’s account. It is because of mixed marriage and its influence. This is evidenced in the use of the Hebrew **לְ** (for) at the start of Ezra 9:2. They now enjoy paganism and its activities because they are married to pagans (Ezra 10:1, 10, 14).

This was a serious issue, seeing that the act has been engaged by many people (Ezra 10:13), both sons and daughters (Ezra 9:2). The fear is that the holy seed¹²² is threatened by this trespass (Ezra 9:2). The very existence of the nation of Israel was threatened¹²³ together with their identity,¹²⁴ should paganism be allowed to bear sway as a result of mixed marriage. Ezra saw the acts of mixed marriage as grievous (Ezra

¹²¹ Ezra’s list of the nations is critical. It reflects other references; Exod 3:8, 17; 33:2; Deut 7:1. “The only differences are that this list excluded the Hivites and added three nations, viz., Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians, probably to bring the list up to date. Such a list was only an indication that non-marriage would be allowed with any of the neighboring nations.” F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 160.

¹²² “The term ‘holy’ shows that the term ‘seed’ has nothing to do with racial prejudice. It is the people whom God had elected as his people... By intermingling with foreign nations and being contaminated with their idol worship, the true religion was in danger of losing its pure character.” Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, 161.

¹²³ Nupanga Weanzana, “Ezra,” *ABC*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 531-542.

¹²⁴ Thomas M. Bolin, “Ezra and Nehemiah,” *New Colledgeville Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Durken (Colledgeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 413.

10:6), and his remedial actions together with the people depict just that (Ezra 10:3, 11-12, 19).

Mixed Marriage at the Time of Nehemiah

The menace of mixed marriage was far from over, even after the drastic intervention of Ezra.¹²⁵ Reckoning his interventions for God's remembrance, Nehemiah recounted the issue of mixed marriage in his days (Neh 13:23). His concerns were that the children from the mixed marriage spoke languages other than the language of Judah (Neh 13:24) – Aramaic or Hebrew. The seriousness of the issue was such that it could potentially defile the priesthood, and therefore, they needed purging (Neh 13:29, 30). This is particularly troubling seeing that the people had already covenanted concerning this same issue (Neh 10:28-30; 13:3).¹²⁶ Nehemiah strongly confronted the offenders with curses and physical punishments including the promise from offenders to stop (Neh 13:25). Definitely, the good old pre-exilic standard was still very well applicable even in the post-exilic era.¹²⁷

Mixed Marriage at the Time of Malachi

The text in Malachi 2:11 talks about the marriage of Judah to the daughter of a strange god. The meaning of this text is described as very obscure.¹²⁸ The obscurity of

¹²⁵ Nupanga Weanzana, "Nehemiah," *ABC*, 543-558.

¹²⁶ Moskala, "Ezra and Nehemiah," 311.

¹²⁷ Mervin Breneman, "Ezra-Nehemiah," *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 579.

¹²⁸ Markus Zehnder, "A Fresh Look at Malachi II 13-16," *Vetus Testamentum* 53, no. 2 (April 2003): 224-259, accessed 18 June 2019. See also, Fanie Snyman, "Investigating the Issue of Mixed Marriages in Malachi, Ezra-Nehemiah and the Pentateuch," *Scriptura* 116, no. 2 (2017): 175-187, accessed 14 February 2012, <http://scriptura.journals.ac.za>.

the text in context is even worse. The text depicts whether Judah married a foreigner or a goddess – whether it was a mixed marriage or mixed worship.¹²⁹ The common majority view of commentators accommodates mixed marriage.¹³⁰

Summary

The evidence in support of the divine origin of the marriage institution, as attested by the Bible, is biblically evidenced in this chapter. Clearly, the maker of the marriage system also proposed the separation that should exist between those who accept His sovereignty over their lives and those who do not. Yet, the failure of His subjects has been consistent in the OT.

¹²⁹ Sheree E. Lear, “The Daughter of a Foreign God: Wordplay as an Interpretive Key in Malachi 2:11,” *Vetus Testamentum*, 65 (2015): 467-473, accessed 5 February 2021.

¹³⁰ John J. Collins, *Joel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary 17 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 1710, 1711.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL ANALYSIS ON MIXED MARRIAGE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Conception of Marriage in the New Testament

Marriage in the New Testament is well testified as a divine development. The testimony of the New Testament writers explicitly affirms the attestation of the Old Testament's account of marriage. The Greek noun used to express marriage in the New Testament is γάμος – a wedding or marriage. The verb form of γάμος is γαμέω. Its range of meaning includes to “fit together,” “marry,” “wedding celebration,” or “engage in sexual relations.

By His teachings and actions, Jesus acknowledged the connection between the Jewish way of life and their marital life. He authenticated the Genesis account, and while answering the pharisaic question, He referred to the records of Moses.¹ Recollecting creation,² He revealed the origin of marriage as when the first two human individuals became beings.³ In other words, by the creation of gender

¹ Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 537.

² David L. Turner, “Matthew,” *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 459.

² Davidson, “The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning,” 5-21.

³ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency, 1984), 8:412.

identity,⁴ God intended marriage even from the beginning. For through them, the earth was to be peopled.⁵

By particularly ascribing to God the words of Genesis 2:24, Jesus averred that divinity is in charge of marriage as both the architect and custodian.⁶ Consequently, Jesus unequivocally sanctioned the divine hand that nuptially seamed the first two individuals together as husband and wife.⁷ Therefore, marriage in the New Testament is attested not without reference to creation, and hence, humans become the beneficiaries of a divine benefactor.⁸

The Biblical teaching on marriage is therefore epitomized in the divine pronouncement as penned in Genesis 2:24 and confirmed in Matthew 19: 4, 5. Consequently, Christianity's concept of marriage makes it honorable not only for its civic manner but its divine origin.

Mixed Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:15

The book of 1 Corinthians is by all means a no mean letter in the New Testament. It is par excellence among the Pauline writings, only it succumbs to Romans and Hebrews.⁹ However, its par excellence in marital matters is without parallel, even in the New Testament.¹⁰ Its length as a letter is incomparable to any

⁴ Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5A, *Matthew-Luke*, 251.

⁵ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 646.

⁶ "God Hath Joined" [Matt 19:6], *SDABC*, 5:454.

⁷ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1983), 63.

⁸ France, *Matthew*, 646.

⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, *The Anchor Yale Bible 32* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 69.

extant ancient text.¹¹ Its relevance in marital matters surpasses all New Testament writings.¹² It presents theology in practice and hence is practically relevant and contemporary. This is the more reason why this research paper needs to incorporate some of the issues in the letter, particularly concerning mixed marriages. Paul substantially devotes the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 7 to marriage and sexuality.¹³

The marital matters of this section will be limited to 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 with particular emphasis on verse 15. The verses above have not escaped scholars' comment there are several of them.¹⁴ This particular chapter and specific verse needs unique attention because of its language, which supposedly permits divorce within mixed marriage and its possible permission for remarriage.

First Corinthians is perhaps correctly called a correspondence.¹⁵ Contrary to what some have commented,¹⁶ it accurately portrays Paul's theology¹⁷ and possesses Pauline theology in toto.¹⁸ According to Robertson and Plummer, "the doctrinal

¹⁰ Gordon D. Fee, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 284.

¹¹ Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul, The Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

¹² Fee, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," 284.

¹³ Davidson Razafiarivony, "Marriage and Sexual Obligations according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7," *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 22, no. 8/14 (August 2017): 58-70, accessed 15 June, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/87196686/Marriage_and_Sexual_Obligations_according_to_Paul_in_1_Corinthians_7_1_7.

¹⁴ Caroline Johnson Hodge, "Married to an Unbeliever: Households, Hierarchies, and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16," *The Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 1 (January 2010): 1-25, accessed 9 February 2021.

¹⁵ James A. Davis, "1-2 Corinthians," *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 1755.

¹⁶ The "letter contains arguments intended to persuade the hearers, not doctrinal treatises formulated to define Christian belief." Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 22.

¹⁷ Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 69.

importance and instructiveness of the letter can hardly be overrated.”¹⁹ Though written to address specific issues, these issues were not peculiar to the church of Corinthians or absent in the other churches as established by Paul, neither are they absent in today’s contemporary society. Therefore, the content of his counsel presents Paul’s theological convictions of how appropriate Christian conduct should be.²⁰ The correspondence clearly reflects Paul’s theological views on those particular issues in a way that he is convinced Christian converts should comprehend.²¹

The city of Corinth was, by its location and prospects, a diversified city along social and racial lines.²² The socio-cultural atmosphere of Corinth was interlaced with both Greek and Roman ethos, with the synchronicity of both Greek and Latin cultures.²³ As a mercantile city,²⁴ the influx of merchants came along with their different religions.²⁵ However, the prevalent religious milieu was characterized by Christianity and paganism as the contending religions. The popularity of the latter is visible in the obvious display of the city's several religious monuments consisting of

¹⁸ Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary 28 (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing Group, 2014), 20.

¹⁹ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T and T Clark, 1914), xxxiv.

²⁰ Stephen C. Barton, “1 Corinthians,” *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 1330.

²¹ Preben Vang, *1 Corinthians*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 36.

²² William Baker, *1 Corinthians*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (CBC) (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 3.

²³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 459.

²⁴ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 40.

²⁵ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 459.

shrines, temples, and sacred grounds.²⁶ The situation of the two religions reflects the context of a Christian church constituted amidst a pagan metropolis.²⁷

Most likely, the Corinthian Christian congregation was composed of both Jewish and gentile converts (1 Cor 12:13; Cf. Acts 18:4).²⁸ However, certain inferences in the Corinthian text suppose that the church community had a pagan majority (6:10-11; 8:7; 12:2).²⁹

Apparently, the identity of the city of Corinth with the Greek verb *korinthiazomai* identifies the city as noted for sexual immorality.³⁰ Such identity had an obvious link with the lives people lived in the city. Apparently, licentiousness in Corinth was without parallel with the contemporary cities. This Corinthian attribute is considered by some as incorrect, particularly in the Roman-controlled Corinth.³¹ However, this view is betrayed by the very issues in the Corinthian letters themselves (1 Cor 5: 9-11; 6:9-11).³² Scholarly consensus of the Corinth society even at the time of Paul may be restated as a city of debauchery and immorality.³³ As a city accredited

²⁶ Maria A. Pascuzzi, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," *New Collegeville Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Durken (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 1267-1302.

²⁷ Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7.

²⁸ David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthians Correspondence: Interest and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement*, Studies of the New Testament and Its World, ed. John Barclay, Joel Marcus, and John Riches (Edinburgh, Scotland: T and T Clark, 1996), 75.

²⁹ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 273.

³⁰ W. Harold Mare, "1 Corinthians," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, abridged ed. New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 606-657.

³¹ Vang, *1 Corinthians*, 24.

³² Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, XIII.

³³ John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, MacArthur Bible Studies (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2001), 5.

with the worship of love and sex known as Aphrodite,³⁴ it is no surprise that sexuality and its related issues of marriage and relationship were featured prominently in the socio-cultural and religious affairs of the people. Converts predictably interfered with their perverse previous sexuality lifestyle with the Christian principles sociocultural, which became internecine in the Corinthian church.³⁵

Literature Review

The text is set within inter-religious marriage and concerns the divorce possibility of a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever.³⁶ Paul begins the discussion of the issue with a plethora of different matters on sexuality (1 Cor 1: 1-11). The beginning words depict the topic that the author is to deliberate concerning the concerns of the Corinthians.³⁷ The section starts with words as if to respond to concerns personally addressed to him in a letter (1 Cor 7:1),³⁸ the content of which may have included questions and responses to his earlier letter (1 Cor. 5:9).³⁹

Within the pericope of the portion under study (1 Cor 7:10-16), Paul recognizes Christ's stated standard on marriage and divorce. Hence, his directive comes with the avowal of what Jesus taught as the only condition for divorce (1 Cor

³⁴ Dachollom C. Datiri, "1 Corinthians," *ABC*, 1403.

³⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians: A Biblical/Jewish Approach," *New Testament Studies* 52 (2006): 205-218.

³⁶ PHEME PERKINS, *First Corinthians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 106, 109.

³⁷ Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina Series 7, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 257.

³⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 483.]

³⁹ Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul, The Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

7:10-11; Cf. Matt 5:31, 32; Mark 10:9). Paul's comment of Christ is uncompromisingly connected with the issue of the interfaith marriage so that it deliberately set the pace for its discussion.⁴⁰

This connection in the texts (1 Cor 7: 10 and verses 12, 13) is revealed when Paul directly applies Christ's command to the believer who should willingly submit to Christ's command.⁴¹ Therefore, with the consciousness of not contradicting Christ, Paul proposes a principle under a context in which Christ's words probably do not directly affect interfaith marriage.⁴² Apparently, Christ's imperative against divorce favored the audience of Jewish couples in the context of the same religion.⁴³ Obviously, the fact that Paul makes a distinction between Christ's direct words and his invocation (1 Cor 7:12) does not depict a "disclaimer of inspiration"⁴⁴ but a disclaimer of a direct quote of Christ.⁴⁵ He is assuredly not denying the presence of inspiration.

Paul now turned to the issue of mixed marriage in verse 12, having addressed the marriage of believers.⁴⁶ The beginning words τοῖς λοιποῖς and, indeed, what follows seem to direct the directive to particular persons – believers married to

⁴⁰ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 343.

⁴¹ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 141.

⁴² James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 696, 697. This is the interpretation of most scholars.

⁴³ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 339.

⁴⁴ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁶ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, ed. Art Farstad (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 1766.

unbelievers.⁴⁷ With this particular mixed marriage, the conversion of the then-unbeliever into a believer supposedly occurred after the marriage. Robertson and Plummer claim that this is evident in the text.⁴⁸

Some scholars propose that the apparent desire for divorce came from converts desiring a greater spirituality. Perhaps their advanced spiritual status was tainted by their unbelieving partners.⁴⁹ Some suppose the advocates for divorce came from the unbelievers who seem uncomfortable with the zeal of their converted partners.⁵⁰

By his instruction, Paul clearly places the power to incept the divorce with the unbeliever (1 Cor 7:12-13, 15).⁵¹ Of course, the unbeliever may also exercise that power in his/her willingness to stay. In this case, the verb *συνευδοκεῖ* may appropriately mean ‘consent’ to depict the willing agreement of the unbeliever to continue the marriage with the believer.⁵² But the believer is outrightly barred from leaving the unbeliever because the unbeliever and the children become subject to *ἡγίασται* by their connection with the believer. Whatever it is, we only know what it does to the believer by way of giving him/her a reason to maintain the marriage.⁵³

⁴⁷ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 304.

⁴⁸ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 141.

⁴⁹ Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 266.

⁵⁰ Mare, “1 Corinthians,” 606-657.

⁵¹ Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 99.

⁵² Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 345.

⁵³ Some suggest that Paul’s expression comes up because the unbeliever is “ceremonially unclean” [Stanley M. Horton, *I and II Corinthians* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1999), 40.

Keener explains that perhaps the propinquity of the believer distinguishes the partner and the children for divine impact and conversion (7:16).⁵⁴ But Keener's comments concerning ἡγίασται appear as a peripheral inductive remark about the text. The believer is not allowed to abandon the marriage because it is a 'marriage' and divinely considered as such, and therefore subject to divine boundary guarding all marriages.⁵⁵ This is perhaps Paul's assuring reason for the believer to keep the marriage.⁵⁶

The widely accepted meaning of the word is that the context distinguishes its usage from its general usage by Paul, particularly because of its clear distinction from σώσεις (1 Cor 7:16).⁵⁷ In this sense, the word does not apply to the unbeliever by his/her faith, this rules out any salvific motive.⁵⁸ As a perfect tense, the term should explain a state rather than an action⁵⁹ so that this sanctification kick-starts the moment one of the partners is converted. Fitzmyer calls it a perfect divine passive to imply that the source of the consecration is God.⁶⁰ This consecration perhaps goes back to the time when marriage was created. It legitimizes and seals the indissolubility of the

⁵⁴ Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 65.

⁵⁵ "Put Away" [1 Cor 7:11], *SDABC*, 6:709.

⁵⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 307.

⁵⁷ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 45.

⁵⁸ Paul W. Marsh, "I Corinthians," *The International Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 1360.

⁵⁹ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 249.

⁶⁰ Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 299.

marriage, a condition from which the non-believer benefits because of the believer, but the believer may not benefit except as permitted by the non-believer.⁶¹

Robertson better explains Paul's statement in stating that the faith of the believer by no means could save the unbeliever, and hence, the statement is meant to qualify the sanctity of the marriage to keep it from any attempt to sever it apart.⁶² In other words, though mixed marriages are not model marriages, they are not inferior marriages; they are regarded as marriages in the right sense as if both are believers for the sake of the partner who is a believer.⁶³

Notwithstanding, if the unbeliever chooses to affect a divorce, the believer should consequentially be at peace. This peace factor (1 Cor 7:15) was the apostle's way of reminding the believers of their first call into the Christian faith. Paul uses it to signify conversion.⁶⁴ He reassures the believer of that call as being for peace amidst the presence of circumstance (John 14:29).⁶⁵ This is evidenced in the use of the plural pronoun ἡμεῖς, a word that involves the writer as an inevitable part of the people called into that peace.⁶⁶ Therefore, the scope of the text goes beyond the believer and, hence, calls attention to Christ's call to be a Christian, which is for our peace.⁶⁷

⁶¹ "Sanctified" 6: 709. By implication, a mixed marriage involving a Christian should not be dissolved since it thrives on the hope of the possible conversion of the unbeliever and because the impetus of the holiness of the matrimony is maintained. [Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd D. Still, *Thinking through Paul: A Survey of His Life, Letter, and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 96.]

⁶² Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 44.

⁶³ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 291.

⁶⁴ John Barclay, "1 Corinthians," *OBC*, 1119.

⁶⁵ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 355.

⁶⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 309.

⁶⁷ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 296.

Otherwise, the believer should be content with a mission to missionarize the unbeliever.⁶⁸ This missionary quest may hopefully be accomplished by the believer's lifestyle indirectly or directly proselytizing the unbeliever.

Exegetical Study

Text translation. The Greek reading of the text is given below:

Τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς λέγω ἐγὼ οὐχ ὁ κύριος· εἴ τις ἀδελφὸς γυναῖκα ἔχει ἄπιστον καὶ αὕτη συνευδοκεῖ οἰκεῖν μετ' αὐτοῦ, μὴ ἀφιέτω αὐτήν· (1 Cor 7:12)

καὶ γυνὴ εἴ τις ἔχει ἄνδρα ἄπιστον καὶ οὗτος συνευδοκεῖ οἰκεῖν μετ' αὐτῆς, μὴ ἀφιέτω τὸν ἄνδρα. (1 Cor 7:13)

ἡγίασται γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ ὁ ἄπιστος ἐν τῇ γυναικὶ καὶ ἡγίασται ἡ γυνὴ ἡ ἄπιστος ἐν τῷ ἀδελφῷ· ἐπεὶ ἄρα τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν ἀκάθαρτά ἐστιν, νῦν δὲ ἅγια ἐστιν. (1 Cor 7:14)

εἰ δὲ ὁ ἄπιστος χωρίζεται, χωρίζεσθω· οὐ δεδούλωται ὁ ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἡ ἀδελφὴ ἐν τοῖς τοιοῦτοις· ἐν δὲ εἰρήνῃ κέκληκεν ἡμᾶς⁶⁹ ὁ θεός.⁷⁰ (1 Cor 7:15)

The literal translation is given below:

To the rest I say, but not the Lord, if any brother has an unbelieving wife and she consents to dwell with him, let not him leave her. (1 Cor 7:12)

And the woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to dwell with her, let not her leave him. (1 Cor 7:13)

for the unbelieving wife is made holy in the husband, and the unbelieving husband is made holy in the wife; else then your unclean are children, but now are holy. (1 Cor 7:14)

But if the unbeliever separates himself, he should separate himself; not having been in bondage⁷¹ the brother or the sister in the such, but in peace has God called us. (1 Cor 7:15)

⁶⁸ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 357.

⁶⁹ As a variant word, I choose ἡμᾶς in place of ὑμᾶς as used in the book because that is what most of the church fathers considered it to be [Raymond F. Collins, *Second Corinthians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 272.] “The manuscript evidence is stronger for ἡμᾶς than for ὑμᾶς.” Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1993), 229.

⁷⁰ Eberhard Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), “1 Cor 7:15.”

⁷¹ William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (M), (1993), s.v. “*dedoulōtai*.”

Word study, grammatical and syntactical analysis. The pivotal verbs in the text constitute *συνευδοκεῖ*, *οἰκεῖν*, *ἀφιέτω*, *χωρίζεται*, *χωρίζεσθω*, and *δεδούλωται*. Beginning from the first word, *συνευδοκεῖ* comes from the root word *συνευδοκεω*. It is a composite word from the two Greek words *σύν* and *εὐδοκέω* (to think well of in common, assent to, feel gratified with).⁷² Its usages may diversely have several meanings, including: “to approve with another; to agree with in principle, to stamp approval, to be willing, agreeable,”⁷³ “to think well of with others, to take pleasure with others in anything, to assent to,”⁷⁴ “to be pleased together with.”⁷⁵ The word is used about six times in the NT. Its NT renditions in the Authorized Version include allow (Luke 11:48), consent (Acts 8:1; 22:20), have pleasure (Rom 1:32), and be pleased (1 Cor 7:12, 13). More appropriately, the usage of the word in the Septuagint, which most likely could have influenced the vocabulary of Paul, translated the word as consent.⁷⁶ The RSV⁷⁷ suitably uses consent in the translation of the word in 1 Corinthians 7:12 and 13.

The Greek word as used by Paul in the text is of the form *συνευδοκεῖ*, it is present active indicative and a third person singular verb.⁷⁸ Greek present indicative indicates from the perspective of the doer action happening at the moment, whether it

⁷² James Strong, *Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* (1997), s.v. “*suneudokeō*.”

⁷³ Mounce, M, s.v. “*suneudokeō*.”

⁷⁴ Edward Robinson, *A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament* (R), rev. ed. (1850), s.v. “*suneudokeō*.”

⁷⁵ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (T), trans. rev. and enlarged (1889), s.v. “*suneudokeō*.”

⁷⁶ T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (2009), s.v. “*suneudokeō*.”

⁷⁷ Standard Revised Version.

⁷⁸ Mounce, M, s.v. “*suneudokeō*.”

is instantaneous or went on for some time when the subject is the doer of the action. According to Robinson, Paul uses this word under the backdrop of mutual understanding.⁷⁹ Thus, in the contextual true sense of the word as used by Paul, the partners of the marriage are convinced of what the transformation of the believed partner entails and both are ready to accept each other as they are just as they were before the change so that perhaps even their religious differences is not perceptible on the outside.

The next Greek word to consider is οἰκεῖν, it originates from the root word οἰκεω which meaning may be expressed as: “to dwell in, live, cohabit, to be indwelling,”⁸⁰ “to reside in a place, to inhabit a place, inhabit.”⁸¹ It seems to be a monopolized word for Paul. He uses it about nine times in his NT writings.⁸² In Romans 7:17, Paul uses it to represent the indwelling of the sinful nature (Rom 7:17, 18, and 20). He also uses it to denote the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9, 11; 1 Cor 3:16). In 1Tim. 6:16, he used it to represent the glorious nature of Christ. The word seems to be used in a manner that shows how something is contained in another in the way that the two are physically indistinguishable. It is only in 1 Corinthians 7:12 that it is used between persons by Paul, particularly for couples.

The Greek word as used by Paul is of the form οἰκεῖν, which is a present infinitive active verb.⁸³ As a present infinitive, its aspect is designated a continuous

⁷⁹ Robinson, R, s.v. “*suneudokeō*.”

⁸⁰ Mounce, M, s.v. “*oikeō*.”

⁸¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BAGD), trans. and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed., rev. and augmented by Frederick W. Danker (2000), s.v. “*oikeō*.”

⁸² Rom 7:17, 18, 20; 8:9, 11; 1 Cor 3:16; 7:12, 13; 1 Tim 6:16.

⁸³ Mounce, M, s.v. “*oikeō*.”

action.⁸⁴ It suggests that the couple in the mixed marriage unceasingly dwells together.

The purported opposite word to the previous word is the Greek word ἀφιέτω. It comes from the Greek word ἀφίημι. According to Strong, “It is an intensive form of εἶμι (to go).”⁸⁵ Its meanings include “to send away, dismiss, suffer, to depart, to emit, to send forth.”⁸⁶ In the NT, it is used in various capacities such as “to forsake, lay aside, leave, put away, remit, suffer, yield up,”⁸⁷ “release from one’s presence, in legal sense divorce, release from an obligation, abandon.”⁸⁸ Danker actually translates its usage in 1 Corinthians 7:11-13 as divorce.⁸⁹ Its usage by Paul is translated in the Authorized Version to mean: leave (Rom 1:27, 1 Cor 7:13, Heb. 2:8, 6:1), forgiven (Rom 4:7), put away (1 Cor 7:11, 12), let him/her (1 Cor 7:12, 13). The Greek word used by Paul, ἀφιέτω, is a present active imperative and third-person singular verb.⁹⁰ Imperatives designate a commanding statement and involve an obligation of the person to the receiving side to act.⁹¹ In specific situations, it often reveals the author’s desire to be viewed as an authority whose word is to override any other.⁹² A. T.

⁸⁴ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 299.

⁸⁵ Strong, *Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “aphiēmi.”

⁸⁶ Mounce, M, s.v. “aphiēmi.”

⁸⁷ Strong, *Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “aphiēmi.”

⁸⁸ Frederick William Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (2009), s.v. “aphiēmi.”

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Mounce, M, s.v. “aphiēi.”

⁹¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 210.

⁹² Verlyn Verbrugge, “Exegetical Insight,” in *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, William D. Mounce, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 309.

Robertson asserts that imperatives connote “the assertion of one’s will over another or the call of one to exert his will.”⁹³ In an active mood, Paul admonishes the believer as the subject not to divorce the unbeliever. By the use of the imperative, he intends that his volition overrides the will or good intentions of the believer.

The root verb of both χωρίζεται and χωρίζεσθω is χωρίζω, which may have different renditions including to divide, to separate by way of a divorce, to take away, to depart, to go away,⁹⁴ to have a self-dissociation, to be apart, to withdraw,⁹⁵ to be asunder, to sever, to disunite, to be in aloof,⁹⁶ to put apart, or to sunder,⁹⁷ to be in division, to be at variance,⁹⁸ to leave a husband or wife in a divorce,⁹⁹ to exclude, to excommunicate, to cut off, to remove, to delete,¹⁰⁰ “to separate by departing from someone,” or “to be separated of divorce.”¹⁰¹ The word is translated in the Authorized Version as: put asunder (Matt 19:6, Mark 10:9), depart (Acts 1:4; 18:1, 2, Phlm 1:15), separate (Rom 8:35, 39; 1 Cor 7: 10, 11, 15; Heb 7:26). The words separate and depart in interchangeably used to translate the word as use by Paul. Jesus technically

⁹³ A. T. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. (London: George H. Doran Company, 1919), 946.

⁹⁴ Bauer, BAGD, s.v. “*chōrizō*.”

⁹⁵ Mounce, M, s.v. “*chōrizō*.” See also, Samuel Bagster, *Bagster’s Analytical Greek Lexicon* (B), (1870), s.v. “*chōrizō*.”

⁹⁶ Perschbacher, ed., *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (1990), s.v. “*chōrizō*,”

⁹⁷ Robinson, R, s.v. “*chōrizō*,”

⁹⁸ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 24th ed. (1901), s.v. “*chōrizō*,”

⁹⁹ Thayer, T, s.v. “*chorizo*.”

¹⁰⁰ G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (L), (1961), s.v “*chorizo*.”

¹⁰¹ Bauer, BAGD, s.v. “*chōrizō*.”

used the word to mean divorce (Matt 19:6, Mark 10:9; cf. 1 Cor 7:10, 11). The word sometimes technically means to divorce.¹⁰²

The word χωρίζεται, as used by Paul, is a present passive indicative, which otherwise makes the believer (subject) the receiver of the unbeliever's action.¹⁰³ However, it is used as a middle voice in this verse, which makes its meaning more of a divorce concept.¹⁰⁴ The χωρίζέσθω, as used in the text, is a present passive imperative that may not be time-bound, but the command in the verb is significant.¹⁰⁵ It permits the person responding to the action to act in a way that allows the one in action to have his/her way. Garland explains this imperative as a done-deal affair.¹⁰⁶ Best expressed, "The Christian partner is under no slavish obligation to refuse to be set free...if the unbeliever demands a divorce, grant it: you are not to refuse."¹⁰⁷ Fee concurrently reiterates that the believer should allow the decision of the unbeliever to divorce.¹⁰⁸

The word δεδούλωται comes from the root verb δούλω and may be rendered invariably as to be in servitude, to be subservient, to be restraint, to be in bondage, to be in service,¹⁰⁹ beslave, to make a slave of, to be a servant, to be in devotedness, to

¹⁰² J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (2004), s.v. "chōrizō,"

¹⁰³ Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, 310.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel R. Mitchell, *I-II Corinthians*, Liberty Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), 2299.

¹⁰⁵ Perschbacher, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, s.v. "douloō."

¹⁰⁶ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 353.

¹⁰⁷ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 143, 144.

¹⁰⁸ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 307.

¹⁰⁹ Mounce, M, s.v. "douloō."

make one's slave, to make subject to oneself,¹¹⁰ to be restraint, to be devoted to one's service,¹¹¹ enslavement, gain control over, hold in bondage,¹¹² slavish, servile, bondman or bondwoman, to be held by constraint of law or necessity.¹¹³ The word is used about eight times in the NT. The Authorized Version translates it as bondage (Acts 7:6; 1 Cor 7:15; Gal 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:19) or servant (Rom 6:18, 22; 1 Cor 9:19). According to Raymond F. Collins, the semantic domain of the word includes *exousiazō*, and it fits well within the context of freedom.¹¹⁴

Its usage in the text (δεδούλωται) makes it a perfect passive indicative.¹¹⁵ “Greek perfect describes an action that was brought to completion and whose effects are felt in the present,” and it is “often used to express great theological truths.”¹¹⁶ It is exegetically critical and deliberately points out the writer's careful choice of words.¹¹⁷ In essence, the separation of the unbeliever frees the believer from his/her enslavement. So, the believer from that moment enjoys that liberty by the choice of the unbeliever to sever the marriage relationship.

¹¹⁰ Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, “*douloō*.”

¹¹¹ Bagster, B, s.v. “*douloō*.”

¹¹² Lampe, L, s.v. “*douloō*.”

¹¹³ Thayer, T, s.v. “*douloō*.”

¹¹⁴ Raymond F. Collins, *Second Corinthians*, 271.

¹¹⁵ Mounce, M, s.v. “*dedoulōtai*.”

¹¹⁶ Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek*, 310.

¹¹⁷ Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, 246.

Theological Study

The Greek verbal rendition of 1 Corinthians 7:15 suggests that Paul permitted the separation of mixed marriages under certain conditions.¹¹⁸ Thus, divorce is allowed when the non-Christian partner freely leaves his or her matrimonial home. This act of Paul under inspiration is a serious authoritative instruction against mixed marriage. In comparison with the stated command of Christ, as referenced by Paul in the same passage (1 Cor 7:10), it raises a serious concern about such marriages.

According to Christ, and as reiterated by Paul, if none of all the circumstances in marital-life that couples face may guarantee a divorce except adultery, then this concession of Paul is nowhere near conceding for conformity to mixed marriage. However, the conversion of one partner still secures the covenantal validity of the marriage and concurrently distinguishes the unconverted to be a candidate for conversion and a target to be witnessed to. Yet, Paul seems to give the sense that a secure marriage is the one attained when faith of the partners is prioritized.¹¹⁹

The believer's chances of marrying the unbeliever. Garland represents the voices of many scholarly views, saying that for purposes of its problems at the time, marriages to unbelievers were to be avoided.¹²⁰ This is because such marriages hardly hold.¹²¹ How should it hold if Christ's words, which should guarantee no divorce in the marriage, may not apply to the person who (as an unbeliever) does not regard

¹¹⁸ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-literary Sources*, s.v. "chōrizō."

¹¹⁹ Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 236.

¹²⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 347,348.

¹²¹ Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 20.

Christ as Lord?¹²² Essentially, it is those who read the Scriptures and consider its teaching as morally abiding who will adhere to Christ's words; that is why Paul could not place the responsibility of no divorce on the unbeliever because he had no jurisdiction.¹²³ The scriptural standard that guides Christians cannot be forced on unbelievers.¹²⁴ Concurrently, the Christian partner who is obligated to abide by Christ's Command is still responsible for obeying the no-divorce instruction, however, the non-Christian who cannot be held to that standard is allowed to exercise his conviction and discretion whether to leave or stay.¹²⁵

The believer's option to remain in the marriage. The last verse of the passage addressing the matter of mixed marriage offers a glimmer of hope to those who are already in a mixed marriage. By the words of this text, Paul provides yet another reason for believers to hold on to their mixed marriages.¹²⁶ By this, there is an optimistic missionary hope for people already involved in mixed marriages intentionally or unintentionally.¹²⁷ The possible conversion of the unbeliever is a sure hope indeed to endure so much marriage difficulties. This hope helps in several circumstances for the believing partner to cope with many severe situations until, in some cases, they triumph at the conversion of the unbelieving partner.

¹²² Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 129.

¹²³ Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 197, 198.

¹²⁴ Dan Mitchell, *The Book of First Corinthians*, Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary Series (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2004), 111.

¹²⁵ Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 270.

¹²⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 309,

¹²⁷ C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1968), 167.

1 Corinthians 7:39d

Pertinent to mixed marriage is this verse of the chapter under study. The chapter seems singled out for the discussion of marriage issues, and this last but one verse is a significant part that explains how Paul seems to instruct his audience in the course of choosing a marriage partner.

Literature Review

This statement of Paul does not have a scholarly consensus on a particular interpretation. The key variable views include the position that Paul's instruction requires the woman to have a Christian partner or a non-Christian partner, but he or she should conduct him or herself as a Christian.¹²⁸ The latter interprets Paul as reminding her of what she is – a Christian whose recognition and acknowledgment should inform her conduct.¹²⁹ The majority of scholarly interpretations favour the former position. According to Thiselton, “Most interpreters...see this as a proviso addressed to the widow specifying that the remarriage is legitimate only if it is to a Christian believer. This is the view of many.”¹³⁰ This position interprets ‘μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ, as ‘only in the Church of Christ’ which is the Christian church.

Garland's view concords with Thiselton's interpretation because it is contextually favorable.¹³¹ Vang equally follows this view based on context.¹³²

¹²⁸ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 416.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 640.

¹³⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 416.

¹³¹ Ibid., 416.

¹³² Vang, *1 Corinthians*, 206.

Ridderbos sees ‘only in the Lord’ as a believer. Hence, Paul’s demand on the believer is to marry another believer.¹³³ Robertson and Plummer affirm that Paul implies that the woman is to marry a Christian.¹³⁴ Perkins agrees that the choiceful spouse must be a Christian.¹³⁵ To think otherwise, which option is to invite mixed marriage is unthinkable, according to Fee, for a Christian to marry a non-Christian is nonsensical.¹³⁶ Fitzmyer sees Paul’s counsel to the woman as against mixed marriage and a preference for a Christian partner.¹³⁷ Lenski warns of expanding the scope of the text inappropriately to include an appeal for marriage benediction or a demand to use the Christian method of marriage, apparently, Paul meant that the woman simply needs to be in wedlock with a Christian.¹³⁸

Exegetical Study

Text translation. Below is the Greek reading of the text. μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ.¹³⁹

Below is the literal translation of the text:

Only in the Lord.

Word study, grammatical and syntactical analysis. The Greek word that Paul used for ‘only’ is μόνον. This word may be understood in various terms such as

¹³³ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 307.

¹³⁴ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 161.

¹³⁵ Perkins, *First Corinthians*, 113.

¹³⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 350, 351.

¹³⁷ Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 329.

¹³⁸ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 339.

¹³⁹ Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, “1 Cor. 7:39.”

only, alone, sole,¹⁴⁰ “the only entity,”¹⁴¹ “alone in respect of restriction,”¹⁴² “one only, entirely alone,”¹⁴³ “alone of many, one out of many.”¹⁴⁴ The semantic range of the word in the context of the under-study verse reveals the meaning of the word to be something that stands out among many.

Μόνον is an adverb.¹⁴⁵ The sentence under study uses this adverb to qualify γαμέω – “to marry, enter the marriage state, be married.”¹⁴⁶

The statement under study is *μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ*; only in the Lord. The usage of this phrase seems single in the whole of the NT. However, Paul seems to use the phrase “in Christ” very often. Some designate it as “Paul’s signature phrase.”¹⁴⁷ The expression appears about seventy-three times in the writings of Paul¹⁴⁸ and operates in different capacities for various functions. Barth acknowledges that Paul applies the phrase in a different context.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps it can provide insight and help in understanding the phrase under study.

¹⁴⁰ Mounce, M, s.v. “*monon*.”

¹⁴¹ Bauer, BAGD, s.v. “*monon*.”

¹⁴² Bagster, B, s.v. “*monon*.”

¹⁴³ Lampe, L, s.v. “*monon*.”

¹⁴⁴ Robinson, R, “*monon*.”

¹⁴⁵ Which may qualify the meaning of a verb, or an adjective [Jeremy Duff, *The Elements of New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 243.]

¹⁴⁶ Mounce, M, s.v. “*gamēthēnai*.”

¹⁴⁷ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “From ‘Blessed in Christ’ to ‘Being in Christ,’” in “*In Christ*” in *Paul: Explorations in Paul’s Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Constantine R. Campbell (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 3.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1 -3, Volume 1*, The Anchor Bible 34 (Cooperstown, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 79.

In an attempt to give meaning to the phrase ‘in Christ,’ Bornkamm provides a significant insight into how Paul uses the phrase ‘in the Lord.’ As referenced by Parsons, Bornkamm says it means a person who believes in Christ (a Christian), a person who is a member of the church, all the benefits believers have in Christ, and all the future benefits believers will have in Christ.¹⁵⁰

The general usage of “*in Christ*” may concisely be categorized into two – locative dative (the where) and instrumental dative (the how).¹⁵¹ “The variety of ways in which the phrases appear in Paul’s letters indicates that they serve as a flexible idiom which may express instrumentality or mode of action as well as locality.”¹⁵² The Instrumental meaning stresses the means¹⁵³ by which something is gained, thus, humans receive everything they deserve from God through Christ. Thus, the entire package of salvation becomes possible and available to whosoever in Christ. Locatively, the people who identify themselves with Christ become visible as a body. The locative meaning specifically signifies the church, which incorporates both the congregation and the place.¹⁵⁴ Schweitzer supposes that the in an incorporated community of Christians.¹⁵⁵ N. T. Wright writes that to describe believers as *en Christō* is to put them in a family whose family proceeds from Abraham.¹⁵⁶ In other

¹⁵⁰ Günther Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D. M. C. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 154 ff, quoted in Michael Parson, “‘In Christ’ in Paul,” *Vox Evangelica* 18 (1988): 25-44.

¹⁵¹ Vanhoozer, “From ‘Blessed in Christ’ to ‘Being in Christ,’” 15.

¹⁵² Mark Seifrid, “In Christ,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (DPHL)*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 433.

¹⁵³ Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, 67. Locative dative and instrumental dative are two ways among the various ways of expressing indirect objects in the Greek language.

¹⁵⁴ Vanhoozer, “From ‘Blessed in Christ’ to ‘Being in Christ,’” 28.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 782.

words, Paul proposes that “Christians ... share Abraham as their distant ancestor, thus become fellow-kin in Christ.”¹⁵⁷ This means that to be in Christ is to share a heritage with Abraham, which constitutes the family of God. In this sense, the corporate sense of being “in Christ” is evidenced. According to Porter, it is best to view the phrase as when a person is under the controlling influence of Christ.¹⁵⁸

The next phrase that can aid in the rendition of the phrase under investigation is the phrase “in the Lord.” Its diverse usage in various capacities by Paul is evidenced in a variety of texts in Pauline's letters. Conceivably, the phrase may refer to a group of people who belong to or identify with Christ – the embodiment of the people of Christ. In this sense, it expresses the common faith of that group of people.¹⁵⁹ In a different usage, it represents a person in whom persons confine their confidence and trust. In this sense, it identifies a personality that people identify with;¹⁶⁰ in another usage, it expresses the embodiment of a subject name, which is the strength that is to aid in testifying of it.¹⁶¹ Alternatively, it is also used to express one's association with Christ.¹⁶²

Seifrid sees “in the Lord” as the alternative form of “in Christ.”¹⁶³ He uses them interchangeably and argues that both phrases operate on “locality,

¹⁵⁷ David G. Horrell, “Ethnicisation, Marriage and Early Christian Identity: Critical Reflections on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3 and Modern New Testament Scholarship,” *New Testament Studies* 62 (2016): 439-460.

¹⁵⁸ Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 159.

¹⁵⁹ Rom 16:2, 8, 11-13, 22; 1 Cor 14:17, 11:11, 15:58, 16:19; Eph 2:21, 6:1, 10, 21; Phil 1:14, 2:29, 4:1, 2; Col 3:18, 4:17; 1 Thess 1:1, 5, 12; Phlm 1:16, 20

¹⁶⁰ Acts 9:42; Eph 1:15; Phil 2:19, 24, 4:4, 10; 1 Thess 3:8; 2 Thess 3:4.

¹⁶¹ Acts 14:3; 1 Cor 9:1, 2; Eph 4:17.

¹⁶² 1 Cor 1:31, 7:22; 2 Cor 10:17; Eph 5:8; Phil 3:1; Rev 14:13.

¹⁶³ Seifrid, “In Christ,” *DPHL*, 433.

instrumentality and modality.”¹⁶⁴ So far, it seems contextually convenient to view Paul’s use of the phrase “only in the Lord” as locative – the church – with the congregation in focus. According to Harris, Paul used the phrase in 1 Corinthians 7:39 as a reference to domain.¹⁶⁵ In that sense, the death of the husband of a woman permits her to marry within the Christian fraternity.¹⁶⁶

Concerning *μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ*, Horrell explains that “while this phrase may be understood in various ways, it seems most plausible – given parallel uses of *ἐν κυρίῳ*, elsewhere in Paul – to take this to mean something like ‘within the sphere of belonging to the Lord’... as most commentators have agreed, both parties to the marriage should be believers in Christ, members of the Christian community.”¹⁶⁷

The phrase *μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ*, as used by Paul, has different renditions in different translations. It is rendered in the NIV as “but he must belong to the Lord.” The NASB, KJV, NKJV, and ASV translate as “only in the Lord.” Fee identifies with the NIV translation of the text: “but he must belong to the Lord” and acknowledges that the widow must marry a believer.¹⁶⁸ Ciampa and Rosner quote NIV in support of their position on what Paul meant, which is marriage to a Christian.¹⁶⁹ It seems contextually plausible to conclude that the phrase is used in place of a Christian.

¹⁶⁴ Seifrid, “In Christ,” *DPHL*, 433.

¹⁶⁵ Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 164.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 164

¹⁶⁷ Horrell, “Ethnicisation, Marriage and Early Christian Identity,” 439-460.

¹⁶⁸ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 850.

¹⁶⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 506.

Theological Study

Even without explicit statements, Paul had provided enough implicit insight to conclusively inform the believer of the dangers of marrying an unbeliever. In the words of Horton, only foolishness will lead a Christian woman to marry a non-Christian, hoping against hope that he will one day be converted.¹⁷⁰

Horton seems to dwell much on the impossibility of the conversion of the unbeliever. Maybe he is much concerned about the dangers of the believer and the challenges to endure before, if at all, the believers come into repentance.

Paul's kind of mixed marriage. According to Thiselton, the kind of mixed marriage Paul is talking about here is the one that happened along the way in the course of the marriage.¹⁷¹ The believer found himself or herself in that marriage unintentionally. Thus, he or she got converted as a married person without a partner. In this case, the partner was not converted and even hostile to the partner for his or her conversion.

Mixed marriage by choice. This kind of mixed marriage comes about with the believer's complete knowledge of what he or she is getting into. With full consciousness of what is at stake, the believer is willing to go into a marriage and become a marital partner of the unbeliever.

This kind of mixed marriage is free from Paul's instruction in this passage. Paul does not comment on this type of mixed marriage. Except if the believer was lied to, into believing that the person he or she married was a believer. In that case, then he

¹⁷⁰ Horton, *I and II Corinthians*, 43.

¹⁷¹ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 640.

or she had entered into a marriage relationship unawares; in this instance, then Paul's instructions will apply.

2 Corinthians 6:14a

One of the texts that is in extreme want of ensconced understanding and application is 2 Corinthians 6:14a. It has received prodigious attention from both ancient and modern theologians. Many commentators have averred their candid opinion of what this text specifically means. Others have exercised an open mind just to accommodate and acknowledge other possible explanations in an attempt to avoid the danger of making the text applicable to a single situation. Yet, others are still careful with portend words of caution to anyone who attempts a definite one-sided explanation of the text.

Paul's manner of discussing marriage needs careful study; otherwise, it confuses.¹⁷² As one of the texts of Paul that seems to discuss marriage, it is paramount that the passage is carefully analyzed and its real meaning expounded.

Literature Review

The attempts made to give understanding to this passage by Paul are very numerous. The literary viability of this text and its periscope is well dealt with by DeSilva.¹⁷³ Different commentators and expositors in several commentaries have shared their views of what they consider to be the thoughts of Paul and the true meaning of this text. Several theologians have contributed their understanding of what the text is supposed to mean. Poole proposes the position of many expositors in

¹⁷² Gerald F. Hawthorne, "Marriage and Divorce, Adultery and Incest," *DPHL*, 596.

¹⁷³ David A. DeSilva, "Recasting the Moment of Decision: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 in Its Literary Context," *Andrews University Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 3-16, accessed 12 February 2021.

attributing the text to a metaphor of dissimilar animals under the same yoke.¹⁷⁴ Hence, its application is a general principle of prohibition of every needless alliance between believers and unbelievers, particularly when different faiths are involved and worship is at stake.¹⁷⁵

This is the position of Harris, who interprets Paul's words as a general principle that concerns all relationships of a believer that may lead to the falling away of a Christian from any Christian standard or weaken his or her influence to witness. Filson understands Paul's expression as a prohibition against believers from engaging pagans in a way that may negatively influence their lives rather than in common friendship and beneficial business transactions.¹⁷⁶

Based on the OT background, Harrison stresses that Paul, by this, imposes a stop to the diverse link between believers and unbelievers.¹⁷⁷ While this does not guarantee total abstinence from all unbelievers in all matters,¹⁷⁸ it may constitute permanent relations.¹⁷⁹ This kind of relationship may include marriage and unfavorable relationships.¹⁸⁰ MacArthur believes that part of the barred relationship is

¹⁷⁴ Hubbard capitulates and contends that the disparity of the strength of the different animals could cause trouble. [Moyer V. Hubbard, "2 Corinthians," *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 3:228].

¹⁷⁵ Matthew Poole, *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vol. III, *Matthew to Revelation* (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1963), 618.

¹⁷⁶ Floyd V. Filson, "2 Corinthians: Exegesis," *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), 10:351-352.

¹⁷⁷ Wick Broomall, "II Corinthians," *WBC*, 1273.

¹⁷⁸ Poole, *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vol. III, *Matthew to Revelation*, 618.

¹⁷⁹ David J. A. Clines, "2 Corinthians," *The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 1401.

¹⁸⁰ Hubbard, "2 Corinthians," *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, 3:228.

those that concern spirituality or those that may have a negative influence on the Christian.¹⁸¹ Bailey and Constable reaffirm Paul's command against believers having a relationship with unbelievers that may defile them spiritually.¹⁸²

Goudge supposes that Paul is referring to associations that the believer has to willingly choose and that marriage may be one of them.¹⁸³ Beasley-Murray affirms that the text was used by Palestinian Jews specifically for mixed marriage even though Paul had a general principle in mind.¹⁸⁴ This Jewish usage resonates with some scholars today who apply the text to mixed marriage and other intimate intercourse. Reid stresses the danger of interfaith marriage and denies the practice in strong terms based on Paul's words.¹⁸⁵ W. MacDonald is certain that the text can only refer to mixed marriage, so a Christian is barred from marrying a non-believer.¹⁸⁶ Kistemaker argues that it concerns the covenant association between believers and unbelievers.¹⁸⁷

According to Keener, Paul used Deuteronomy 22: 10 and Leviticus 19:19 as the bases to convey his message against interfaith marriage of God's people with

¹⁸¹ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1634.

¹⁸² Mark Bailey and Tom Constable, *Nelson's New Testament Survey* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 358.

¹⁸³ H. L. Goudge, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1928), 71.

¹⁸⁴ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *2 Corinthians*, The Broadman Bible Commentary 11 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1971), 50.

¹⁸⁴ A. R. Fausset, "2 Corinthians," *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testament*, ed. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 3:354.

¹⁸⁵ James Reid, "Exposition of the Book of 2 Corinthians," *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953) 10:351- 352.

¹⁸⁶ W. MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1845.

¹⁸⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *II Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 228.

pagans.¹⁸⁸ Thus, marriage is to be reckoned as an inevitable point of Paul's reference.¹⁸⁹

Gould disagrees with the application of the text to mixed marriage and argues for a general principle.¹⁹⁰ Calvin agrees with Gould, except that mixed marriage will fall under the general application.¹⁹¹

From several scholars' convinced opinions, it is just about conclusive that the flashback from Paul appears to come from Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the OT with its metaphoric language. The seemingly general thought across these referred theologians and referenced materials leaves no doubt of the confusion this text poses. However, the common idea that seems persistent is the fact that Paul purported a separation between believers and unbelievers. This separation, though real, was not defined. Therefore, the most potent intellectual guess by theologians and scholars has included abstinence from pagan worship, spiritual associations, and other associations of a detrimental nature, as well as any romantic and marriage relationship.

Exegetical Study

Text translation. Below is the Greek reading of the text:

Μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις.¹⁹² (2 Cor 6:14a)

Below is the literal translation of the text:

¹⁸⁸ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 503.

¹⁸⁹ Hawthorne, "Marriage and Divorce, Adultery and Incest," *DPHL*, 598.

¹⁹⁰ E. P. Gould, *Corinthians*, American Commentary on the New Testament (Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1887), 185.

¹⁹¹ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. T. A. Smail (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 10: 90.

¹⁹² Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, "2 Cor. 6:14."

Become not unequally yoking with unbelievers.

The text that could largely put 2 Corinthians 6:14a into a proper context is the last verse of 2 Corinthians 5, where Paul introduces to the Corinthians the salvation and grace of God, which exchange Christ instead for our sins so that in Christ, Christian may be justified as righteous (2 Cor 5:21 KJV). Epithet is the central issue in terms of the gospel,¹⁹³ the text appropriately links the chapters both before and after it and, even more, its next chapter to give it the right perspective. In 2 Corinthians 6:1, Paul reveals his partnership with God through which the Corinthians have been graced,¹⁹⁴ the results (which is salvation) of which should not be vilified or unduly delayed. In 2 Corinthians 6:3-10, Paul profiles the conditions (both positive and negative) that operate and shape his life, having received the grace himself and about which he preaches. He reveals to the Corinthians the challenges he faces in preaching about that saving grace outcome that comes along with it – both the external bodily distress (beatings, incarceration, sleeplessness, fasting, honor, dishonor, etc.) and the internal character development (purity, knowledge, long-suffering, kindness love, etc.) Consequently, he confronts the Corinthians about their lifestyle, together with the things that equally restrict them from attaining the best out of the grace for that they should endeavor to overcome.¹⁹⁵ This synergism is displayed in the mid-chapters (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) as the focal point of the letter. By way of revealing what is to be overcome, he composes in verse 14 in capsule what should be done so that the grace

¹⁹³ Broomall, “II Corinthians,” 1272.

¹⁹⁴ David Woodall, “2 Corinthians,” *The Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1807-1826.

¹⁹⁵ Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 1233.

they have received will not be in vain (2 Cor 6:1).¹⁹⁶ This contextual theme of chapter 6 is verified in the words of Murphy-O'Connor: "salvific appeal of 6:1-2 is prolonged in 6:11 and 6:14-7:1, where the focus is on the Corinthians' relation to God, who has acted so graciously in their behalf."¹⁹⁷

Word study, grammatical and syntactical analysis. The Greek word that may prodigiously clout an effective interpretation of the text in focus is ἑτεροζυγοῦντες. It is "formed from the words ἕτερος, 'another,' and ζυγος, 'a yoke.'"¹⁹⁸ It comes from the root word ἑτεροζυγέω. This critical word of this text may refer to: not to be yoked equally,¹⁹⁹ to be unevenly matched or mismated or unequally matched with someone,²⁰⁰ to be in an unequal partnership,²⁰¹ to be in fellowship with the unequal,²⁰² "to be yoked heterogeneously ... Christian living in familiar intercourse with pagan idolaters."²⁰³ This present participle²⁰⁴ functions as an action word describing and qualifying what the recipients should resist doing with people of mutually exclusive faith.

¹⁹⁶ Maria A. Pascuzzi, "The Second Letter to the Corinthians," *New Colleagueville Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Durken (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017), 1313.

¹⁹⁷ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Second Letter to the Corinthians," *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 822, 823.

¹⁹⁸ John E. Janbaz, "The Doctrine of Separation as Taught in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1," *Western Reformed Seminary Journal* 4, no. 1 (February 1997): 1-7.

¹⁹⁹ Mounce, M, s.v. "heterozugeō."

²⁰⁰ Bauer, BAGD, s.v. "heterozugeō."

²⁰¹ Lampe, L, s.v. "heterozugeō."

²⁰² Thayer, T, s.v. "heterozugeō."

²⁰³ Robinson, R, s.v. "heterozugeō."

²⁰⁴ Mounce, M, s.v. "heterozugeō."

The next word that may influence the meaning of the text is the Greek word ἀπίστοις, which has its root in the Greek word ἀπίστος. ἀπίστος may mean unbelieving, unbeliever, disbelieving, to violate your faith, unfaithfulness, faithlessness, infidel, pagan,²⁰⁵ “without faith or trust, incredulous,”²⁰⁶ “a gentile, heathen, want of faith in Christ and his gospel.”²⁰⁷ Paul explicitly uses this word as an adjective to describe the heathen (a pagan).²⁰⁸ They are practically unbelievers in the faith of the apostles but believers of their heathen faith with characteristic characters of idolatry and immorality.²⁰⁹ In the context of 2 Corinthians, these unbelievers may as well be idolatrous Christians or perhaps Christians who oppose Paul’s gospel.²¹⁰

One of the preliminary words that critically proves exegetically beneficial is the Greek word γίνεσθε. As an imperative, it seems to prohibit something on the brink of the beginning,²¹¹ “in a sense of ‘God forbid.’”²¹²

According to Lenski, the combination of the imperative with the participle reveals the imperative as “do not try, do not ever incline or begin to be so yoked up.”²¹³ As a negative present periphrastic imperative (γίνεσθε ετεροζυγουντες),

²⁰⁵ Mounce, M, s.v. “apistos.”

²⁰⁶ Thayer, T, s.v. “apistos.”

²⁰⁷ Robinson, R, s.v. “apistos.”

²⁰⁸ Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of II Corinthians*, The Ages Digital Library (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1997), 183.

²⁰⁹ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 342, 345.

²¹⁰ Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Perplexing Scriptures Explained: 2 Corinthians 6:14,” Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, accessed 15 January 2021, <https://www.logos.com/product/163783/perplexing-scriptures-explained-2-corinthians-6-14>.

²¹¹ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 344.

²¹² Janbaz, “The Doctrine of Separation as Taught in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1,” 1-7, 15.

²¹³ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 1077.

Berchie sees it as an ongoing act and therefore renders it as “do not continue to become heterogeneously yoked.”²¹⁴

The position of the text, while not out of context,²¹⁵ may portray a caution against a practice that is beginning to gain acceptance.²¹⁶ Most likely, the text in context following the flow of thought is an exhortation that urges the recipients to act right. This involves a restraint against something yet to be done.²¹⁷ Concomitantly, the phrase may also express a stopover of something that is being done or yet to be done.²¹⁸

The question is, how do people yoke? The challenge is that the word and, indeed, most words within its context are hapax legomena,²¹⁹ and therefore, the impossibility of other references for clarity is surely scarce. However, the scholarly consensus is that the imagery (Cf. Lev 19:19; Deut 22:9-11) explains the prohibition of mixing items or putting different objects entangled together and using the same to achieve a purpose. Yet, the context conveys the coming together of a believer and an unbeliever.²²⁰ This exact mismatched union, which is supposed to be forbidden, is only a subject of scholarly suggestion and expositors' intelligent guesses. Barnett

²¹⁴ Berchie, “Marrying an ‘Unbelieving’ Partner,” 1-17.

²¹⁵ A critical consideration of the passage reveals its position as appropriately aligned to the context [Issiaka Coulibaly, “2 Corinthians,” *ABC*, 1425-1438]. Some also argue that the passage is out of context. [Colin G. Kruse, “2 Corinthians,” *New Bible Commentary*, ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994), 1188-1205.]

²¹⁶ The tense instead of describing actions that are yet to occur (Raymond F. Collins, *Second Corinthians*, 144), rather describes an already happening action.

²¹⁷ Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, Scotland: T and T Clark, 1915), 206.

²¹⁸ Janbaz, “The Doctrine of Separation as Taught in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1,” 1-7.

²¹⁹ Margaret Macdonald, “2 Corinthians,” *OBC*, 1141.

²²⁰ Raymond F. Collins, *Second Corinthians*, 144.

argues that it is an exhortation against joining in the practices of the pagan temple services.²²¹ The fifth of the follow-up rhetorical interrogations supposedly provides clues as to Paul's intent (2 Cor 6:16).²²² Based on this, some insist that the text can only refer to a ban against believers involved in pagan worship with pagans.²²³ Others particularly stress Paul's intention as a marital incongruity.²²⁴ This incongruity is likened to the one between a clean believer and an unclean unbeliever under the same yoke.²²⁵ Some trace this position to the second follow-up question (what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Cor 6:14), so that communion connotes marriage or spiritual relationships.²²⁶ Some commentators explain that Paul, in general terms, meant "permanent associations."²²⁷ According to Barnett, the subsequent antithetical rhetorical questions answer and amplify what constitutes unequally yoking.²²⁸ However, it seems that the subsequent questions only explain Paul's exhortation but do not conclusively cover in its entirety the compendium meaning of the text. This is indicated by the use of the γὰρ, which semantically introduces each of the antithetical questions.²²⁹ Apparently, Paul does not use five rhetorical questions if he intended

²²¹ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 341.

²²² James A. Davis, "1-2 Corinthians," *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 1806.

²²³ Kruse, "2 Corinthians," 1188-1205.

²²⁴ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1243.

²²⁵ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 1078.

²²⁶ Broomall, "II Corinthians," 1272.

²²⁷ Clines, "2 Corinthians," 1401.

²²⁸ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 345, 346.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

them to fully explain what he meant. The phrase “employs just a few words, but they speak volumes.”²³⁰

The text of 2 Corinthians 6:14a has an implicit reference to a believer and an explicit reference to an unbeliever. Between these two is the avoidance of commingling of some sort. What sort of mingling is what has indulged the minds of biblical scholars both in the past and in the present? The text seems to reflect the frequent use of antithetical parallelism in the letter, particularly in the first half of the chapters.²³¹ This literary style in the text strongly connects the text to the entire letter.

In 6:4-7, Paul outlines all that he and his coworkers have been through and are still going through for the sake of the ministry and the salvation of the Corinthian Christians. In 6:8-10, he continues by introducing some antithetical parallels. At the end, Paul in 6:11 reveals to the Corinthians how he had, with an open heart and open speech, outlined what he and others are enduring. As a result, he points to the Corinthians the affections that will jeopardize their effort in attaining an ideal Christian character (1 Cor 6:12). In return, he indulges them for an open heart (1 Cor 6:13).²³² He then proceeds to outline the kind of affection they should avoid beginning with an encapsulated statement (1 Cor 6:14a). This “moral demand”²³³ is further

²³⁰ Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 1078.

²³¹ David A. DeSilva, “Recasting the Moment of Decision: 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 in Its Literary Context,” *Andrews University Studies* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 3-16, accessed 12 February 2021. For instance, comfort and trouble (1:4); Suffering and consolation (1:5); affliction and salvation (1:6); passing away (3:7, 11, 13) and remains (3:11); ministry of death (3:7) and ministry of the spirit (3:8); ministry of condemnation and ministry of righteousness (3:9); glorious and glory that excels (3:10); perishing and renewed (4:16); light of affliction and weight of glory (4:17); seen and not seen (4:18); temporal and eternal (4:18); destroyed and eternal (5:1); clothed and naked (5:3); clothed and unclothed (5:4).

²³² Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 204.

²³³ James Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, *The Expositor's Bible* (New York City, NY: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1903), 240.

unpacked in an antithetical parallel of what constitute the ungodly affections (1 Cor 6:14b-16a).²³⁴ So avoidance of these affections should lead to the indwelling of God in the body temple (1 Cor 6:16b). It is, therefore untenable to suppose that this text is disconnected from its preceding or succeeding texts.²³⁵

Consequently, understanding the identity of the believer and the unbeliever²³⁶ is critically paramount. Considerably, the identity of the believers is rarely in doubt. It is agreed that those converted to the Corinthian church as Christians believe in the gospel as preached by Paul. The unbelievers are viewed by some as interlopers who contended with Paul with false gospel message.²³⁷ Plummer strictly sees them as non-Christian heathens and pagans to the exclusion of the prophets of falsehood.²³⁸

Evidence in the epistle, in both explicit and implicit manner, suggests that Paul saw unbelievers in both ways. The literary unit of the text under study (2 Cor 6:14-7:1)²³⁹ suggests unbelievers to be unconverted heathen idol worshipers while inferences of some texts (2 Cor 2:17, 11:4, 13, 26; 1 Cor 5:11, Rom 16: 17) suggest converted brethren with unconverted characters as well as false preachers.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ This antithetical parallelism reflects Hebrew parallelism; “where ideas are set out in pairs... the author presents an idea and then adds a second line that may repeat the first line, or present the opposite of the first line... There are examples in 2 Corinthians of this classical Hebrew style. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 22.

²³⁵ A. Plummer, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 62.

²³⁶ This Greek word that refers to unbeliever is used thrice by Paul in 2 Corinthians – 4:4, 6:14, 15. George V. Wilgram, *The Englishman’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (1998), s.v. “*apisto*.”

²³⁷ Berchie, “Marrying an ‘Unbelieving’ Partner,” 1-17.

²³⁸ Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 206.

²³⁹ Berchie, “Marrying an ‘Unbelieving’ Partner,” 1-17.

²⁴⁰ Rodríguez, “Perplexing Scriptures Explained.”

Theological Study

While the text ceases to give a definite natural reason for the coming together of the believer and the unbeliever, it is indeed silent on the results of their togetherness.²⁴¹ Therefore, it is safe to suppose that coming together inevitably includes wedlock,²⁴² even if narrowly.²⁴³ Thus, however narrowly it is must concern mixed marriage as a type of marriage. And indeed, virtually all commentators acknowledge the fact that marriage must inevitably become one of whatever it is that is considered an unlikely association Paul intended. According to Rodríguez, other words based on the same verbal root as ἑτεροζυγέω also talk about marriage (Matt 19:6; Mark 10:9).²⁴⁴ He concludes that Paul’s “usage of the term cannot be restricted to mixed marriage alone, however. It’s better to understand the verb as designating any type of connection with unbelievers – including marriage – that may lead to compromise.”²⁴⁵

Marriage as the most possible association. After all, what association or relationship surpasses that of marriage? Obviously, if Paul meant any yoking, it must first be marriage and then any other thing. Besides, it is possible to break almost all relationships without difficulties, except, of course, blood or family relationships.

But Paul is not talking about the family relationship, therefore, the most probable one that is likely to cause danger and difficulty to serve is the most likely of

²⁴¹ Donald G. McDougall, “Unequally Yoked: A Re-examination of 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:4,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 113-137, accessed 10 February 2021, <https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj10h.pdf>.

²⁴² Harris, “2 Corinthians,” 1236.

²⁴³ Denney, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 240.

²⁴⁴ Rodríguez, “Perplexing Scriptures Explained.”

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

what Paul will be concerned about. In this case, the talking point will most likely include marital associations.

Other associations Paul talked about. Considerably, if Paul could suggest avoidance and no dining with unbelievers (1 Cor 5:11, Rom 16:17), then how can he sanction marrying them? Paul was for all associations and interactions with unbelievers that threatened their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For Paul, nothing should be considered more important than the Christian's relationship with the Lord. Nothing should separate the believer from his or her faith and disconnect or stand between him or her and the Saviour.

Summary

The chapter reveals how the NT confirms the evidence of the OT, particularly through the testimony of the Son of God. Glimpses of the NT's view on mixed marriage are glowing enough in the Pauline writings. The NT implicitly attests to the OT instructions on mixed marriage.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Theoretical Implication

I should say that the Adventist Church has prohibitions against interfaith and intrafaith marriage in its manuals.¹ However, these prohibitions are at the level where members are discouraged; members do not incur any church disciplinary action for marrying non-Adventists. For detailed instructions on this, one may have to consult the *Church Manual* and the Writings of Ellen White to appreciate the position of the church on this issue. The conclusions of this research do not reflect the instructions from those materials; thus, the limited scope of the research did not allow that, however, the conclusions may help to encourage discussions in that regard.

The import of these research findings in terms of their implications for the challenges in the New Tafo District is multifaceted. Primarily, it should be our established understanding that mixed marriage in the biblical sense is fundamentally different from mixed marriage as it is experienced and practiced today. The biblical evidence concerning the issue of mixed marriage was basically between two established religions – one religion based on the worship of the God of Israel and the other the religion of paganism based on the worship of the Devil. (1 Cor 10: 19-20).

Mixed marriages were generally occurring between these two religions. Thus, members of the former religion were easily entrapped into adopting the practices of the latter religion through a marriage alliance between the two. This necessitated the

¹ The first and most important document aside the Bible that guide the church on this issue is the *Church Manual*. The second is the *Minister's Manual*.

provision that required a strict barrier that prevented God’s children from entering into any consensual communion with members of any other religion, particularly marital and sexual relationships. This presupposes that genetics does not define the reason that necessitated the prohibition of mixed marriage; it was based on faithfulness to the Deity and the temptation that is likely to affect such a devotion.² Hayes is convinced that the ban on intermarriage specifically applied to non-Israelites who were not ready and willing to join the cultic community of Israel to worship as they do.³ In this sense, the conversion of the non-Israelites was critical in defining whether the marriage was a mixed marriage or not. Technically, intermarriage correctly “connotes marriage with an unconverted Gentile. The latter would be perceived as a threat to the moral and religious integrity of the Israelite partner precisely because he or she has rejected the option of conversion.”⁴ This is practically real in Deuteronomy 21:10-14 where Israelites are allowed to marry non-Israelite women captured in war without recourse to their ethnicity. Numbers 31 further demonstrates how Midianite virgins were imported and accepted into the Israel community where marriage to them was possible. Again, the Deuteronomy 23 prohibition of Ammon and Moabs (which some argue concerns marriage⁵) still permitted them after some time. Consequently, “all of the anti-exogamy texts in the

² Karen S. Winslow, “Mixed Marriage in Torah Narratives,” in *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Christian Frevel (Manhattan, NY: T and T Clark, 2011), 133.

³ Christine Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (January 1999): 3-36, accessed 9 September 2020, http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0017816000017831.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Torah and the Prophets imply that the threat of apostasy drives the prohibitions against intercourse with foreigners.”⁶

Under the backdrop of this, it is hardly possible to formulate an outright theological doctrine to prohibit mixed marriage in Christendom in our contemporary context of religious denominationalism. Thus, whoever attempts to make a case for the strict application of the prohibition rules as found in the scripture may be found wanting, or whenever a denomination fails to acknowledge the background of the prohibition rules and insist that members adhere to it without any condition, that denomination will certainly have to combat concerns that can be raised against such an attempt. To do such a thing, it is easy to rely on the ban and the reason for the ban and ignore the context. In doing that, one will fail to give explicit proof of how it has to be so because one cannot find the context today, and therefore, the ban will hardly work if the stress is on the ban. But if we concentrate on the reason for the ban, then we can talk about coming up with a principle that can sustain the ban. But even that, it will not be a ban but something that should be discouraged. However, Berchie says an Adventist can marry a non-Adventist. It seems to me that he dwells only on the ban and makes a case for its irrelevance today and ignores the reason. Thus, the fact that the context today does not support the ban means that the reason for the ban is to stand tall in any provision to make a case for the ban. My concern is that we can hardly maintain the ban, but we can stress the reason for the ban and formulate a principle to discourage the act. According to Gerhard Hasel, “Theology is not a building without foundations. The foundations have to be laid soundly for the building of theology to survive the storms of theological conflict and the shaking

⁶ Winslow, “Mixed Marriage in Torah Narratives,” 136.

caused by the earthquakes of intense inquiry. The structure of theology has to stand the test of time.”⁷ Of course, implicit proofs cannot compel the formulation of any theology for instruction and reprove. I do not in any way wish to suggest that the implicit meaning of a text should be ignored, but that they should remain at the level of theological discourse where such acts are discouraged but not banned, except there are explicit text that forms the foundation for which the implicit text will now be employed to back it up.

Thus, because the provision prohibiting mixed marriage was strictly religiously based on true and false worship, it is challenging to employ such prohibition in the phenomena of today’s mixed marriage. No denomination can claim to have the whole truth. They are all striving to practice what they are convinced to be the truth from the scripture. One can hardly say the entire religious practice of a denomination is wrong, but unlike denominations, one can easily say all the religious practices of paganism were wrong. Religiously based mixed marriage presently may be categorized into three generalized phenomena. The first could be consigned as between members of organized religions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. The second could be viewed as between members of recognized worldviews – Theism, Atheism, Deism, Naturalism, Nihilism, Existentialism, Eastern Pantheistic Monism, The New Age, Postmodernism, etc.⁸ The third could be assigned as between members of compartmental groups within any of the organized religions (for instance, between members of the various denominations in Christianity,

⁷ Gerhard F. Hasel, “Scripture and Theology,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 47-94.

⁸ “A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions which we hold about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.” James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 17.

Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Adventist, Lutheran, Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc., or between members of the various groups in Islam).

Every single one of these categorizations does not have explicit biblical reference to sanction or reject it. Of course, systematic theological principles could be established based on the doctrinal position and differences between each religious group, but that could only suffice based on implicit meanings assigned to the texts that deal with mixed marriage in the Scriptures. I should point out that the issues dealing with interdenominational marriages have received little research attention, per the scope of how far I could go in this research. Scholars should consider exploring the biblical position of interdenominational and intradenominational marriage.

Practical Implication

This research focuses on the last category as reflected in the challenges facing the New Tafo District. Unfortunately, the prohibition of this kind of mixed marriage is not a type that can be defended with strict biblical evidence. I must stress that it is the Old Testament scripture that has explicit commands against mixed marriage, and such command is not explicit in the New Testament. Apart from that, the context where the command was issued is altogether different from what exists today. What we discussed about Paul's instruction concerns the issuing of a general principle that again reflects the OT context of true worship of Jehovah and false devil worship. But this is not so today. Arguably, the type of mixed marriage we have today among the various denominations is a situation that seems particularly difficult to biblically defend its prohibition. This is so because every single one of the denominations involved claims to worship the same Lord and God of the same Scriptures; they all use the scripture as a moral standard. In this case, one cannot employ the OT and the NT context to prohibit such marriages.

Of course, beforehand, members of the Adventist Church seem to have accepted the fact that the church frowns on Adventist-Non-Adventist marriage.⁹ This has been the trend and has been unchallenged until recently, when members started to strongly demand the biblical correctness of that position.

For the church to continue maintaining such an entrenched position on this matter, it will require that it provides proof of the position from scripture where the context is as we have it among denominations. But I suppose there is hardly an explicit reason in that regard in today's context. And hardly does a church make a theological issue an entrenched position when the matter does not bother on direct salvific issue. That is why the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have any recourse to discipline any member who marries outside it as it does in disciplining members who commit adultery and the like. That is why the church discourages but does not deny it. Thus, even at the time when it was banned in the scripture for the Israelites, the mere act of practicing was not condemned alone, but rather the sin that the act forced the people to commit was the issue that was condemned alongside the act. The act must go along with the reason, and the reason must be fulfilled for the act to be wrong. Thus, one cannot condemn the act when the reason behind the banning of the act has not occurred. It is only when the mixed marriage has led to the apostasy of the Israelite person that the scripture will always reprove the mixed marriage and use it as the reason for the act. In the instances when the mixed marriage does not lead to apostasy, the scripture does not condemn it in any way, otherwise, those non-Israelites who were married into Israel are to be condemned.

⁹ Ronald A. G. du Preez, "Redefinition of Marriage? A Closer Look at the Genesis of Marriage," in *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church*, ed. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim (Berrien Spring: MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005), 481-491.

As it stands, the church lacks clear Old Testament and New Testament commands to prohibit mixed marriage outright. The best the church can do is to form a systematic theology out of the events that happened in the scripture concerning mixed marriage and strongly advise members of what could likely be the outcome of getting into a mixed marriage – either interfaith or interdenominational. Also, the writings of Ellen White can be of great help in dealing with this issue by the church.

Thus, to dwell on the intent of biblical writers who deal with mixed marriages, it is strongly evidenced that a principle that could guide against inter-denominational marriage could be devised. I say a principle but not a command. A principle that can be used to discourage but not to deny. Almost all the clearest provisions that proscribed mixed marriage were perhaps projected to focus on specific groups, but the reason behind the prescription could help to create a general principle that could distinctively help to discourage the phenomena. For instance, Hayes highlights this rationale in Deuteronomy 7:4 in stating that though the ban is targeted, the reason behind it can help to “both broadens and limits the ban. This rationale can be used to broaden the scope of the prohibition because it can be argued that intermarriage with any Gentile who turns an Israelite to idolatry should be prohibited. At the same time, it does not render the law of universal application.”¹⁰ For all practical purposes, even apodictic laws are practically paradigmatic– they set standards for general application.¹¹ The principle of the broadened scope of interreligious prohibition may be applicable even in today’s interdenominational marriage phenomena because

¹⁰ Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources,” 3-36.

¹⁰ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 140.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

religious moral principles deal with the practice of biblical truth. Therefore, the doctrines that denominations practice must be truths that have moral influence on members, which should concern any member who wants to leave for marriage reasons.

According to Keller, “From the outside the various Christian churches and traditions can look extremely different, almost like distinct religions...all Christians who take truth and doctrine seriously will agree that these differences between churches are highly significant. They make a major difference in how one’s faith is held and practiced.”¹² Except Keller is mistaking; we can assume on the facial value that we are all of the same, perhaps, worship the same God , so how persons and groups define the God they worship and how they interpret and practice biblical principles is peripheral. But if that is to be the case, then there are not many differences between Christianity and some other religions, say Islam and Judaism, whose God does not include the Son and the Holy Spirit. In that sense, there can be no mixed marriage to consider between these religions. But if these differences should be onboard as far as these religions are concerned, then those differences must be equally applied to denominations that hold such views – like the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Latter-Day Saints. Except that (as some suggest) Christendom is to consider some of these denominations as non-Christian denominations, perhaps as cults.¹³ In that case, marriages to members of these denominations may be considered mixed marriages just as in the case of the other religions. Even so, to ignore the doctrinal similarities these denominations have with most other Christian denominations and hold them

¹² Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 120.

¹³ Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 11.

accountable by dwelling on their doctrinal differences is to be inconsistent, because they still hold some doctrines similar to many other denominations just as Islam and Judaism hold some doctrines similar or perhaps the same as some Christian doctrines. In that sense, the inconsistency seems paramount because no two different denominations are the same, otherwise, they would not be different denominations in the first place.

Except, of course, as Fee and Stuart explain, we consider some Christian doctrines as primary and others as secondary, where “at the primary level are those doctrinal statements derived from the explicit propositions or imperatives of Scripture. At the secondary level are those statements derived only incidentally, by implication, or by precedents.”¹⁴ Even so, the significance of secondary doctrinal statements may not be underestimated,¹⁵ because, as it is, who decides what is primary and what is secondary? Because, as they put it, the Lord’s Supper is primary while the option of how it is to be observed is secondary, baptism becomes primary while the method is secondary, and the necessity of Christian congregation is primary, but the day of worship is secondary.¹⁶ The theological significance of a biblical doctrine being it primary or secondary dwells on the practice of the denomination.¹⁷ Because, for Seventh-day Adventists, the day of worship is a biblical primacy. So are the practices of other denominations; therefore, to trivialize the practices of different Christian denominations and count them out as if their significance in the marital

¹⁴ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 97.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

journey of couples is insignificant or that they have no bearing on marital issues and conjugal stability is to naively ignore the obvious.

It is therefore imperative that the Adventist Church takes time to reconsider how its policies deal with the problems of mixed marriage. The church on the ordinary level just fails to address the issue of mixed marriage at the interdenominational level. There is hardly any analysis of records of members involved in mixed marriages, and there are no statistics that evaluate the situation that I know of, as far as the general church is concerned.

Conclusion

I should point out that the position taken by Berchie on this issue seems fair in today's context but not entirely satisfactory to warrant a general rule that apparently settles the ensuing matters. His position that the Bible does not deal with denominationalism is a fact. To acknowledge that the phenomena of denominationalism are a present-day production in Christendom is to agree with the obvious. But the obvious also stands as evidence that there are differences. Thus, to insist that "people of different denominations can marry *in the Lord*,"¹⁸ so that "a Seventh-day Adventist Pastor can unite a Seventh-day Adventist and a Methodist *in the Lord*"¹⁹ is to set standards whose limitations fail to acknowledge the differences between denominations and why denominations exist in the first place. For instance, Rhodes observes that the word *denomination* in English emanates from the word *denominare* in Latin, meaning 'to name.'²⁰ It involves diverse groups in Christianity

¹⁸ Berchie, "Marrying an 'Unbelieving' Partner," 1-17.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2015), 18.

with names “reflecting a wide range of distinctive beliefs and practices.”²¹ Clearly, the denominational diversity in Christianity has a basis in the theology of each denomination. Evidently, the similarities shared by the Catholic Church with some Protestant churches include infant baptism, which is the practice of “Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, and Reformed churches.”²² Should the fact that this is contrary to Adventist theology not be a concern for the Adventist to be involved in a mixed marriage? Therefore, if the mention of the Methodist church as cited above is a representation of all denominations, then that should consistently exclude no denomination, a situation which would hardly be acceptable.

The basic issue that influenced the need for forbidding mixed marriage in the scripture concerned worship and the truth that truly informs the biblical way of worship as reflected in the theology of each denomination cannot be a side issue, particularly, for a couple who wish to make truth and spirituality the center of their marriage.

Therefore, rightly put, the scripture predates denominationalism, and hence, a ban on denominational mixed marriage does not have a biblical antecedent. However, the insurance that can be imitated from the instructions that deal with the ban on interreligious mixed marriage is implicitly evidenced. Thus, for denominations to exist, there must be some level of truth to the claim of their practices and why they exist. Apparently, for someone to refuse to join a particular denomination (except for some other reason, which reason in any case should not be personal but doctrinal), that person must be doing so because he or she is sure that salvation is sure by following the teachings of that denomination. Therefore, to simply switch from your

²¹ Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations*, 18.

²² Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 1160.

denomination to another on marital grounds is to trivialize your denomination beforehand, and really, you need not have been in that denomination or you did not know why you were there.

Consequently, to belong to a denomination is to be settled within oneself that you are in the right place with the right doctrine that helps you to worship the right Deity. Based on this, marriage need not force anyone out of their denomination. In that case, denominational mixed marriage may be discouraged based on the biblical truth that forms the foundation of every denomination. This way, the church can reason with members at the theological level.

Although there is no explicit prohibition of interfaith marriages in the Bible, it is important to remember that such unions involve individuals with different religious beliefs, which can, in turn, hurt the stability of the family unit. Essentially, this sets the stage for potential disagreements and disputes. For instance, there may be questions about which church or school the children born into such a marriage will attend. Or, if one spouse belongs to a church where infants are baptized and wishes to have the newborn baptized, while the other spouse opposes it due to attending a church where infant baptism is not practiced. There may also be questions about which church to give voluntary offerings to and many other similar issues. All these potential disputes can lead to misunderstandings, hurt feelings, false expectations, and, of course, adversely affect the relationship between spouses. Therefore, although there is no direct prohibition of interfaith marriages in the Bible, individuals entering into such marriages should carefully weigh all the pros and cons and undergo premarital counseling where all contentious issues will be addressed.

Recommendation for New-Tafo District

This is what the New Tafo district can do as well. They can stress the denominational differences at the doctrinal level. The leadership at the district level should consider mixed marriage as an issue that needs to be tackled and must start paying attention to the details people provide at the Home and Family Life Committee meetings. The details should be scrutinized, and the appropriate people should be consulted to help guide members who attempt to have a mixed marriage. Most often, members who bring partners from other non-Adventist Churches do not get much attention from the minister of the church because the minister may likely not be the person to counsel them. This is partly because members have it that Adventist ministers can in no wise be involved if there is a non-Adventist partner involved. However, in several instances, before people come to the Home and Family Life Committee, they have already gone through much preparation, and sometimes going back becomes difficult. The leadership of the church can still do their best in revealing to the two people the dangers that are likely to ensue. The church should still endeavor to be part of the marriage event even as the non-Adventists insist on not being Adventists.

The education of members should be done before they even think of getting married. They can do this only if they have details of those who have been involved in mixed marriages and have been able to trace whether they are still in the church or not. They can document their testimonies and interviews as evidence of the reasons for which they discourage mixed marriages. The district can put a specific day on the calendar of events where the sermon will be about mixed marriage and its consequences. Discussions on the issue should be encouraged at those events. Lectures, discussions, preaching, sermons, workshops, etc., should be employed to

bring the issue into the consciousness of members. Educating members on the issue should be a practice.

The last recommendation is about changes in the minister's handbook, where the phrase was changed from "should not perform" in the 1992 edition to "strongly urges" in the 1997 and 2009 editions, as already discussed (see Chapter 2). These changes are not for granted; they were born out of concerns from a 'Division' president who argued that the minister's abstention from officiating mixed marriages is hurting the churches, and rightly so. Ministers facing these challenges condition the changes and do well to officiate such marriages that involve Adventists and non-Adventists. In doing so, they will become the spiritual guardians of the marriage, they will be the first point of contact when there are challenges in the marriage (which are inevitable). Their involvement in helping them through the challenges may involve inviting them to church and encouraging them to fellowship together as a couple. In doing so, they may win the non-Adventist even after the marriage rather than deny officiating and then leave the couple for a different minister of another church who will eventually be the person of the first point of call.

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