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# Ethnicisation, Marriage and Early Christian Identity: Critical Reflections on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3 and Modern New Testament Scholarship*

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**In the discipline of New Testament studies there are particular reasons for critical vigilance concerning the ways in which historical reconstructions can be shaped by a sense of both religious and ethnic or racial superiority. This risk applies specifically to the contrasting depictions of Judaism and Christianity, and it is notable that, despite the changing phases of scholarship, the tendency to replicate a dichotomy between an ethnically particular Judaism and a universal, open, trans-ethnic Christianity persists. As one facet of a critical consideration of this dichotomy, this essay considers two specific texts that contribute to the ethnicisation of early Christian identity: 1 Corinthians 7 and 1 Peter 3. In the former, Paul develops two principles that are significant in the ethnicisation process: endogamy as norm for the contraction of marriage (1 Cor 7.39) and the assumption that children with a Christian parent (even in a so-called 'mixed marriage') are part of the Christian community (1 Cor 7.14). The later household codes further develop this idea that the household is a place for the reproduction and generation of Christian identity. In 1 Pet 3.1–6, part of the letter's household code where mixed marriage is again an issue, two features of the text are of particular interest: its focus on a 'way of life' (ἀναστροφή) and the connections drawn between conduct and ancestry. In both of these respects, 1 Peter seems to be constructing a form of group-identity that shares features in common with Jewish notions of group-belonging in the period. The 'ethnicising' features of these texts raise questions about any categorical contrast between Jewish ethnicity and Christian inclusive trans-ethnicity. Why then is such a depiction of the Christian achievement – which in many ways parallels depictions of modern**

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**Western political liberalism – so enduring and appealing within the discipline? It is suggested that the answer must be sought in the religious and ethnic or racial location of that scholarly tradition.**

**Keywords:** ethnicity, race, ethnicisation, mixed marriage, 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3

## 1. Introduction

In the discipline of New Testament studies there are particular reasons for critical vigilance: since many scholars in the discipline are Christians, and many work for institutions or faculties with an explicit alignment to some branch of Christianity, there is the perennial risk that the historical study of Christian origins will be skewed by convictions concerning the truth and value of Christianity, even its superiority to other forms of religion. Moreover, since the origins of the modern scholarly discipline lie in Western Europe, and its centres of power remain there and (increasingly) in the USA, there is also the risk – uncomfortable though it may be to acknowledge it – that historical reconstructions may be shaped by a sense of Western European racial, ethnic or cultural superiority. Nor should it be surprising if religion and race – or, put more critically, a sense of both religious and ethnic or racial superiority – are intertwined, albeit in complex and often unacknowledged ways.[1] Indeed, in a recent issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* focused on religion and racialisation, Nasar Meer argues not only for the importance of recognising this interconnection but also for an integration of 'the contemporary study of antisemitism and Islamophobia squarely within the fields of race and racism'.[2] In the field of New Testament studies it is the depiction of Jews and Judaism in particular that risks being skewed by these facets of scholarship's location, since unpacking the complexities of Christianity's emergence within a Jewish matrix is one of the central preoccupations of our discipline. But the implications of constructions of this particular and historically tortured relationship may spread more widely.

1 Whether it is appropriate to use the term 'race' is contested, and space does not permit a detailed discussion here. In brief, my reasons for retaining the term in scholarly discourse are as follows: (1) 'race' is more or less equivalent to the term 'ethnicity', which came to displace it in the 1950s for particular historical reasons; (2) both terms refer to identities that are constructed rather than objectively or physically 'real'; (3) avoiding the term 'race' makes it too easy to sweep aside questions about the racialising of others and of racism, as if these adhered specifically to a biological theory of race. Social scientists vary in their approach to the two terms, but both continue to be discussed, defined and (in part) distinguished; see e.g. S. Cornell and D. Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (Sociology for a New Century; Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2007); J. Stone and R. Dennis, eds., *Race and Ethnicity: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches* (Blackwell Readers in Sociology; Oxford/ Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003).

2 N. Meer, 'Racialization and Religion: Race, Culture and Difference in the Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (2013) 385–98, at 386.

I raise these broad issues at the outset in order to set a context for the more specific investigations that follow. As part of setting a wider disciplinary context I also want to sketch very briefly the contours of what seems to me a recurring and persistent depiction – namely a dichotomy between an ethnically particular Judaism and a trans-ethnic, inclusive, universal Christianity. Despite criticisms of this dichotomy, and despite changing methods, perspectives and phases of scholarship, its basic form and prominence seem to endure, up to the present day. I select just a few landmarks to illustrate my point.

Ferdinand Christian Baur, whose work continues to shape the contours of our discipline, famously interpreted the significance of Christianity in Hegelian terms, as the pivotal step in humanity's historical progress from legalism and servitude towards the true religion of spirit and freedom. For Baur, Paul was especially crucial in this development:

> It was he who not only was the first to express explicitly and in definitive form the fundamental distinction between Christian universalism and Jewish particularism, but also from the beginning made this the task and guiding norm of his apostolic activity ... he broke through the bounds of Judaism and lifted Jewish particularism up into the universal idea of Christianity.[3]

It is by now a rather well-worn theme that early New Testament scholarship, often in critical dialogue with Baur, especially in Germany, tended to develop its portrait of emergent Christianity in terms of a contrast between a narrow, legalistic Judaism and a universalistic Christianity, where the spirit brings true freedom to all who believe. But the new phase of scholarship inaugurated by E. P. Sanders was intended to challenge such contrasts, and to treat Jewish religion on its own terms, with sympathetic understanding, and not as a problematic and flawed system awaiting its proper fulfilment in Christ. As has been pointed out, however, Sanders' depiction of Judaism – particularly his insistence that it 'kept grace and works in the right balance'[4] – was more shaped by Protestant

3 F. C. Baur, *Das Christenthum und die christliche Kirche der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* (ed. Klaus Scholder; Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben; Tübingen, repr. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann [1966], 1860[2]) 44–5: 'Er war es somit auch, welcher den christlichen Universalismus in seinem principiellen Unterschied vom jüdischen Particularismus nicht nur zuerst ausdrücklich in seiner bestimmten Form aussprach, sondern auch von Anfang an sosehr zur Aufgabe und leitenden Norm seines apostolischen Wirkens machte ... da er ... auch die Schranken des Judenthums durchbrach und den jüdischen Particularismus in der universellen Idee des Christenthums aufhob.' My translation differs somewhat from that in F. C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, vol. I (London & Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1878[3]) 46–7.

4 E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977) 420.

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theological presuppositions than he perhaps intended.[5] Moreover, in the early work of the major proponents of what James Dunn famously labelled the 'new perspective' on Paul, the contrast between an ethnocentric Judaism and an inclusive Christianity seems as firm as ever. In his programmatic essay Dunn summarises what he sees as Paul's argument: 'that the covenant should no longer be conceived in nationalistic or racial terms ... Rather it is broadened out as God had originally intended – with the grace of God which it expressed separated from its national restriction and freely bestowed without respect to race or work.'[6] Or, as N. T. Wright puts it: 'Monotheism and election served, in the Judaism of Paul's day ... as boundary markers round the community, as symbols of national and racial solidarity.'[7] What Paul thus opposes is 'a kind of meta-sin' on Israel's part, 'the attempt to confine grace to one race'.[8] Despite the significant changes, then, as Caroline Johnson Hodge has noted, this kind of new perspective continues to replicate what she concisely labels 'the universal/ethnic dichotomy'.[9]

Still more recently, in ongoing development of social-scientific approaches to New Testament interpretation, a series of works have drawn on studies of identity and ethnicity to show how various New Testament authors seek to construct a positive identity for groups of Christ-followers that is non-ethnic, or trans-ethnic, and, as such, offers a hopeful solution to the problems of inter-ethnic conflict, then and now.[10] For example, in his major study of Romans from 2003, Philip Esler argues that Paul is confronting a situation of ethnic tension between Jews (or 'Judeans') and Greeks, and seeks to resolve this tension not by erasing these ethnic differences but rather by creating a new, trans-ethnic, superordinate group-identity in Christ that 'transcends' this division.[11] Esler has made a

5 See esp. P. S. Alexander, 'Review of E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*', *JJS* 37 (1986) 103–6; J. Neusner, 'Mr Sanders' Pharisees and Mine: A Response to E.P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah*', *SJT* 44 (1991) 73–95, at 92–5; R. B. Matlock, 'Almost Cultural Studies? Reflections on the "New Perspective" on Paul', *Biblical Studies/Cultural Studies: The Third Sheffield Colloquium* (ed. J. C. Exum and S. D. Moore; JSOTSup 266; Gender, Culture, Theology 7; Sheffield: SAP, 1998) 433–59, at 444–7.

6 J. D. G. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', *BJRL* 65 (1983) 95–122 (repr. in J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law* (London: SPCK, 1990) 183–214); quoted from *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 197.

7 N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991) 13–14.

8 Wright, *Climax*, 240.

9 C. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford/New York: OUP, 2007), 8.

10 This work does not feature in Johnson Hodge's brief critique of the ethnic/universal distinction in portrayals of Judaism and (Pauline) Christianity; instead, she turns to the 'radical' new perspective of Gaston, Gager, Stowers and others, and follows its key conviction that Paul is speaking to Gentiles and not to Jews (*If Sons, Then Heirs*, 6–9).

11 P. F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

similar case for the Gospels of Matthew and John, while Aaron Kuecker has done so for Luke-Acts.[12] Fundamental to such arguments, once again, is a clear distinction between an ethnic Judaism and a trans-ethnic or non-ethnic Christianity. Esler, for example, is insistent that Ἰουδαῖος should be translated Judean, since it (like Ἕλλην) denotes an ethnic form of identity, whereas the Christ-movement is a non-ethnic 'socio-religious' grouping;[13] thus, in his words, Judean and Christ-following identities are 'as unlike as chalk and cheese'.[14] Likewise, though arguing from a very different perspective, Steve Mason concludes his arguments for understanding Ἰουδαῖος to denote an ethnic identity in the Greco-Roman world with the assertion: 'It becomes increasingly clear being a "Judaean" and being a follower of Jesus were incommensurable categories, rather like being a Russian or a Rotarian, a Brazilian or a Bridge player. Scholars know this well …'[15] Without denying the differences of terminology and perspective, once again it seems that the essential shape of the ethnic/non-ethnic dichotomy – between Jewish ethnicity and Christian openness and voluntarism – is here reproduced.

Critically probing the legitimacy of this persistent dichotomy and its changing contexts and expressions would require a wide-ranging and extensive study. One key issue concerns the classification of Judaism as an 'ethnic' form of identity and Christianity as non-ethnic, or supra-ethnic, in character. Even assessing the legitimacy of this distinction would entail a broad range of considerations. But one important dimension of the issue, the focus of some recent research, is to consider how far, and in what ways, emerging Christian identity might itself be constructed and defined in ethnic or racial terms. In a ground-breaking and influential study, Denise Kimber Buell explores the deployment of what she calls 'ethnic reasoning'

12 P. F. Esler, 'From *Ioudaioi* to Children of God: The Development of a Non-Ethnic Group Identity in the Gospel of John', *In Other Words: Essays on Social Science Methods and the New Testament in Honor of Jerome H. Neyrey* (ed. A. C. Hagedorn, Z. A. Crook, E. Stewart; Social World of Biblical Antiquity, Second Series, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007) 106–37; id., 'Judean Ethnic Identity and the Matthean Jesus', *Jesus – Gestalt und Gestaltungen: Rezeptionen des Galiläers in Wissenschaft, Kirche und Gesellschaft* (ed. P. von Gemünden, D. G. Horrell, M. Küchler; FS Gerd Theissen; NTOA 100; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013) 193–210; id., 'Intergroup Conflict and Matthew 23: Towards Responsible Historical Interpretation of a Challenging Text', *BTB* 45 (2015) 38–59; A. J. Kuecker, *The Spirit and the 'Other': Social Identity, Ethnicity and Intergroup Reconciliation in Luke-Acts* (LNTS 444; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2011).

13 On *Ioudaioi* as (ethnic) Judeans, see *Conflict and Identity*, 62–74; on Greek ethnicity, pp. 54–61. On the Christ-movement as socio-religious, see e.g. 'Matthean Jesus', 195; 'Intergroup Conflict and Matthew 23', 56.

14 Esler, 'From *Ioudaioi* to Children of God', 132; cf. id., 'Matthean Jesus', 195.

15 S. Mason, 'Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History', *JSJ* 38 (2007) 457–512, at 512.

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in early Christian texts from the second and third centuries.[16] For Buell, the rhetorical deployment of ethnic terminology – both to incorporate and to exclude – emerges as a strong and significant feature of early Christian discourse. In various ways, the major studies of Caroline Johnson Hodge, Love Sechrest and Bruce Hansen have turned this focus onto Paul, arguing that Paul deploys ethnic categories and creates a kind of ethnic identity for his communities of converts to Christ.[17]

In these latter studies there is a particular focus on discourses about ancestry and descent, reflecting the prominence of these characteristics in social-scientific definitions of ethnicity, classically expressed by Max Weber, who defines ethnic groups as those 'which cherish a belief in their common origins of such a kind that it provides a basis for the creation of a community'.[18] There is of course a large and diverse social-scientific literature on this subject, but a common theme is the conviction that ethnic and racial identities are constructed and believed, rather than real, in any physical or biological sense.[19] It is therefore

16 D. K. Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). See also ead., 'Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition', *HTR* 94 (2001) 449–76; ead., 'Race and Universalism in Early Christianity', *JECS* 10 (2002) 429–68; and also the significant earlier study of J. M. Lieu, 'The Race of the God-fearers', *Neither Jew Nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002) 49–68 (first published in *JTS* 46 (1995) 483–501).

17 Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*; L. L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (LNTS 410; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2009); B. Hansen, *'All of You Are One': The Social Vision of Galatians 3.28, 1 Corinthians 12.13 and Colossians 3.11* (LNTS 409; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2010). Also taking Buell's agenda forward, in a study of Paul's deployment of ethnic mutability and imaginative reconstructions of the Corinthians' possible reactions to it, is C. W. Concannon, *'When You Were Gentiles': Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (Synkrisis; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2014).

18 M. Weber, 'Race Relations', *Max Weber: Selections in Translation* (ed. W. G. Runciman; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978 [1922]) 359–69, at 364). Weber continues, explaining the distinction between 'ethnic group' and 'kinship group': 'The question whether they are to be called an "ethnic" group is independent of the question whether they are objectively of common stock. The "ethnic" group differs from the "kinship group" in that it is constituted simply by the belief in a common identity' (p. 364).

19 See e.g. the comments of K. Avruch, 'Culture and Ethnic Conflict in the New World Disorder', *Race and Ethnicity: Comparative and Theoretical Approaches* (ed. J. Stone and R. Dennis; Blackwell Readers in Sociology; Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 72–82, at 72; J. Stone, 'Max Weber on Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism', in Stone and Dennis, *Race and Ethnicity*, 28–42, at 33; P. Jackson and J. Penrose, 'Introduction: Placing "Race" and "Nation"', *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation* (ed. P. Jackson and J. Penrose; London: UCL Press/Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993/4) 1–23; M. Augoustinos and S. De Garis, '"Too Black or Not Black Enough": Social Identity Complexity in the Political Rhetoric of Barack Obama', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 42 (2012) 564–77.

through discourse and social practice that ethnic and racial identities are made and sustained.[20] A range of factors – which vary in their prominence and salience – can undergird and express such identities. Richard Schermerhorn, for example, offers a concise definition: an ethnic group is 'a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood'.[21] Schermerhorn also adds that there must be 'consciousness of kind among members of the group',[22] what Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartman call the 'criterion of self-consciousness. Ethnic groups are self-conscious populations; they see themselves as distinct.'[23] Particularly relevant to the study of earliest Christianity is their observation that, despite the prominence of notions of ancestry and shared history, ethnic groups can be newly made, in what Cornell and Hartman call 'ethnicisation'. This, they explain,

> is the making of an ethnic group. It is the process by which a group of persons comes to see itself as a distinct group linked by bonds of kinship or their equivalents, by a shared history, and by cultural symbols that represent … the 'epitome' of their peoplehood. It is a coming to consciousness of particular kinds of bonds: the making of a people.[24]

Johnson Hodge and Sechrest, in their different ways, have drawn attention to the importance of narratives of ancestry and descent, as Paul constructs for his converts an ethnic group-identity as children of Abraham.[25] In the following study, I want to continue this exploration of the ethnic features of identity-construction in earliest Christianity, but through a smaller-scale focus on particular convictions and social practices crucial for making and maintaining such an identity – crucial, that is, for the process of ethnicisation – namely those related to marriage and family. There are two New Testament texts in particular that invite our attention in this regard, though they have not, to my knowledge, been considered in

20 Cf. M. G. Brett, 'Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics', *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. M. G. Brett; Biblical Interpretation; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 3–22: 'Although *ethnie* can be exceptionally durable once formed, they are also symbolic constructions which have to be maintained by reiterated practices and transactions' (p. 10).

21 R. A. Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1978 [1970]) 12. A more extended discussion of characteristics of ethnic groups, based on Schermerhorn's and widely adopted in subsequent work, is presented by A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) 22–31; summarised in J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith, 'Introduction', *Ethnicity* (ed. J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith; Oxford Readers; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 3–14, at 6–7.

22 Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relations*, 12.

23 Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race*, 19.

24 Cornell and Hartman, *Ethnicity and Race*, 35.

25 See esp. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 79–107; Sechrest, *Former Jew*, 113–33.

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terms of their significance for our understanding of ethnicisation in early Christian discourse: 1 Corinthians 7 and 1 Peter 3,[26] the two New Testament texts that deal, among other things, with so-called 'mixed marriage'.[27]

## 2. Marriage, Children and the Passing on of Christian Identity: 1 Corinthians 7

In his response to the Corinthians' written enquiry on such matters (1 Cor 7.1), the broad contours of Paul's instruction regarding marriage are clear: those who are married should maintain their sexual relationship and not divorce; those who are unmarried do best to remain unmarried, as long as their passions can be controlled. In a situation he deems one of distress (7.26)[28] and eschatological constraint (7.29–31), Paul understandably offers little instruction about whom one should or should not marry, and even less about rearing children; his own ascetic preference is simply to avoid marriage altogether (7.7, 27, 38). Yet there is at least one brief attempt to establish guidelines for permissible marriage: in a final piece of advice to widows, for whom death has severed the bond of their previous marriage (cf. Rom 7.2), Paul indicates that a widow is free to marry 'whom she wishes', with the proviso μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ (7.39). While this phrase may be understood in various ways, it seems most plausible – given parallel uses of ἐν κυρίῳ elsewhere in Paul[29] – to take this to mean something like 'within the sphere of belonging to the Lord'; in other words, as most

26 In her recent research, Johnson Hodge has also turned to these texts, and to the topic of mixed marriage in early Christianity; but her interest in ethnic identity-construction seems not to be in view in these studies. C. Johnson Hodge, 'Married to an Unbeliever: Households, Hierarchies, and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 7: 12–16', *HTR* 103 (2010) 1–25; ead., '"Holy Wives" in Roman Households: 1 Peter 3: 1–6', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Feminist Thought* 4/1 (2010), available at: http://digitalcommons.salve.edu/jift/vol4/iss1/1/, accessed 21 May 2015; ead.,'"Mixed Marriage" in Early Christianity: Trajectories from Corinth', *Corinth in Contrast: Studies in Inequality* (ed. S. J. Friesen, S. A. James, D. N. Schowalter; NovTSup 155; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014) 227–44.

27 It should be noted that the equivalent label in German, *Mischehe*, evokes negative and problematic associations, due to the anti-Semitic marriage laws passed during the Nazi era, such that some authors prefer to use terms like *interkulturelle* or *interreligiöse Ehe*. See e.g. C. M. Maier, 'Der Diskurs um interkulturelle Ehen in Jehud als antikes Beispiel von Intersektionalität', *Doing Gender – Doing Religion: Fallstudien zur Intersektionalität im frühen Judentum, Christentum und Islam* (ed. U. E. Eisen, C. Gerber, A. Standhartinger; WUNT 302; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 129–53, at 129.

28 For arguments in favour of the nuance 'distress' here, see G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: Revised Edition* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) 364.

29 The phrase is frequent and used with somewhat diverse senses, but see esp. 1 Cor 11.11; Phil 4.1–2; 1 Thess 3.8; 5.12; Col 3.18; 4.7; Eph 2.21; 5.8; 6.1. This is also one indication that the crucial social boundary is between those who are and are not 'in Christ'; there is no corresponding evidence that such an identity-defining boundary exists between Jewish and Gentile Christians, *pace* Johnson Hodge, *If Sons,* 138, 146, *et passim.*

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commentators have agreed, both parties to the marriage should be believers in Christ, members of the Christian community.[30] This understanding would seem to be reinforced by 2 Cor 6.14–7.1, with its instruction not to be 'unequally yoked with unbelievers' (6.14, ESV).[31] While this latter text is notoriously enigmatic, and does not directly mention marriage, it is unsurprising that it was taken to express a principle that applied to marriage, reinforcing the norm that marrying a non-Christian was forbidden.[32] In this, Paul and his early Christian interpreters were adapting Jewish custom, which – broadly, and with important variations – prohibited intermarriage, unless the Gentile partner converted.[33]

By contrast, Paul's instructions earlier in the chapter to believers married to unbelievers (7.12–16) seem to be concerned not with rules about entering marriage but rather with the situation created within an existing marriage (εἰ τις

30 So e.g. O. L. Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS 80; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) 109; A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 604; Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 392 with n. 379. This becomes the dominant interpretation from the earliest times (emphatically in Tertullian, also Cyprian) though not the only one (Augustine, for example, sees here no prohibition of marrying an unbeliever). See further S. J. D. Cohen, 'From Permission to Prohibition: Paul and the Early Church on Mixed Marriage', *Paul's Jewish Matrix* (ed. T. G. Casey and J. Taylor; Bible in Dialogue 2; Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011) 259–91, at 260–3; W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther (1 Kor 6,12–11,16)* (EKKNT 7.2; Zürich: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1995) 210–11.

31 M. E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (ICC, vol. I; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994) 473 comments that Paul '[d]oubtless … does have in view the contraction of a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever' but also other associations and relationships: the text 'is unspecific and therefore widely comprehensive'. On the complex and much discussed questions concerning the origins, affinities and original location of this text, see T. Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther (2 Kor 1,1–7,4)* (EKKNT 8/1, 1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener/Ostfildern: Patmos, 2010) 378–82 (and the literature listed on pp. 366–7).

32 See further C. E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford/New York: OUP, 2002) 97–100; Cohen, 'Permission to Prohibition'. Cohen, however, stresses too far the ambiguities of Paul's various texts on this topic, seeing this (implausibly) as representing Paul's 'permission' for mixed marriages to be undertaken, a permission which is then largely reversed in early Christian teaching, especially by Tertullian and Cyprian.

33 The contrasting positions may be epitomised by *Joseph and Aseneth* on the one hand, which depicts in legendary form the conversion of a previously idolatrous gentile woman to marry a Jewish man, and *Jub.* 30.7–17 on the other, which develops the view from Ezra/Nehemiah that marrying foreign women is forbidden (Ezra 9–10; Neh 9.2; 10.30; 13.3, 23–31). See further Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, esp. 68–91; S. J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1999) 241–62; Maier, 'Interkulturelle Ehen in Jehud'. On Paul and the early Christians' appropriation of this tradition, see Hayes, *Gentile Impurities,* 92–103.

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ἔχει ...) by the conversion of one partner.[34] Such instruction may also confront a sense on the part of some of those addressed – perhaps some of the women in particular[35] – that separation from an unbelieving spouse would be the best course of action.[36] Indeed, along with the stern rhetoric of 2 Cor 6.14–7.1, the arguments Paul deploys in the immediately preceding chapter against sex with prostitutes – that sex involves a bodily union incompatible with union with Christ (1 Cor 6.15) – could encourage and legitimate just such a conviction.[37]

The basic shape of the instruction Paul gives concerning these 'mixed marriages' follows that which he gives to married members of the Christian community, and which he directly attributes to 'the Lord' (7.10–11): do not divorce or separate.[38] What has caused much more discussion is the reason he gives to support this teaching in the case of mixed marriages: that the unbelieving spouse is sanctified (ἡγίασται) by their believing partner, and that the children of such a union are holy (ἅγια).[39]

The 'sanctification' of the unbelieving partner is conveyed by their Christian spouse. Rather than the unbeliever rendering the marital union impure or illicit, the effect is the other way around.[40] An illuminating perspective on this sanctification is presented by Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, who proposes a 'halakhic interpretation' of this verse based on comparisons with Jewish halakhot, particularly insofar as these refer to the act of betrothal as one of 'sanctification' which thus indicates that the marriage is licit.[41] By insisting that the believing partner 'sanctifies' the unbelieving spouse, Paul is effectively ruling 'that mixed

34 Cf. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 94. On this as the dominant understanding of vv. 12–16, see Schrage, *Korinther*, 121.

35 Cf. M. Y. MacDonald, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1 Corinthians 7', *NTS* 36 (1990) 161–81; ead., *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 189–95; A. C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 85.

36 For later examples of such separations, see Justin Martyr, *2 Apol.* 2; *Acts of Peter* 34. For discussion, see MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 205–13; Johnson Hodge, 'Mixed Marriage'.

37 See further A. S. May, *'The Body for the Lord': Sex and Identity in 1 Corinthians 5–7* (JSNTSup 278; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004) 117–19; D. G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2005) 144–52, 163–4.

38 This particular topic is one clear indication that Paul is concerned with existing marriages, not with whom one may legitimately marry.

39 Cf. Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, 111, who comments that, while the advice Paul gives 'is clear enough', his 'attempt to justify his claim that believers should not seek separation from their non-believing partners ... contains a number of vexing problems'.

40 Cf. Schrage, *Korinther*, 104: 'Die Nichtchristen werden durch den christlichen Ehepartner *ge*heiligt, nicht die Christen *ent*heiligt' (emphasis original).

41 Y. M. Gillihan, 'Jewish Laws on Illicit Marriage, the Defilement of Offspring, and the Holiness of the Temple: A New Halakic Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:14', *JBL* 121 (2002) 711–44, at 717–18. She draws particular attention to the 'striking linguistic parallel' in *m.Qidd.* 2.1.

marriages are, in fact, licit'.[42] A key difference needs to be stressed, however: the Jewish parallels cited by Gillihan deal with betrothal and thus with the issue of marriages that may legitimately be initiated. Paul, by contrast, as Gillihan notes, is dealing with pre-existing marriages and whether they may legitimately be continued.[43] The unbeliever's status remains somewhat ambiguous: they are counted as holy but remain ἄπιστος; and their future salvation is uncertain though clearly a reasonable hope.[44] Essentially, the sanctifying effect of the believing partner on the unbeliever indicates that the marriage may legitimately continue, and should not on account of its 'mixedness' be regarded as πορνεία and dissolved.[45]

Underlying this insistence on the sanctification of the unbelieving partner, however, is a prior and more fundamental conviction about the holiness of the children of such a marriage.[46] The unbelieving partner must in some way be sanctified, 'for otherwise your children would be unclean'; but in reality they are, emphatically, holy: νῦν δὲ ἅγιά ἐστιν.[47] Moreover, if the children of such a marriage are holy, then, *a fortiori,* those of a marriage between believers are assumed to be so. It is highly unusual for Paul to devote even this much interest to children, and the passing reference serves only to support his arguments for maintaining existing mixed marriages. Yet his (apparently shared) presumption that the children are holy is of considerable significance.

42 Gillihan, 'Jewish Laws', 716; cf. 727–8, 738; also Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, 112: 'the marriage itself is holy and therefore need not be dissolved'.

43 Cf. Gillihan, 'Jewish Laws', 729, where this difference is noted.

44 Commentators have long discussed whether Paul's comment in v. 16 is optimistic or pessimistic concerning the unbelieving partner's salvation. It seems best to accept that the questions leave the implied answer open, but hopeful. As J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on Epistles of St Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (London/New York: Macmillan, 1904) 227 wisely remarks: 'these expressions [τί οἶδας ... εἰ], so far from emphasizing a doubt, express a hope ... implying that there is a reasonable chance'. Cf. also Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 337–8; Schrage, *Korinther*, 112.

45 Cf. Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, 112.

46 Cf. Gillihan, 'Jewish Laws', 714–15: 'As evidence that this principle is true [*sc.* that the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the believing spouse] Paul points to the fact that the children are holy, not impure.' Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, 111, describes this as 'the presupposition of Paul's argument'.

47 The proposal of Leif Vaage that both parts of this clause represent true conditions, such that Paul paradoxically ascribes to the children a 'labile' social identity that is simultaneously both unclean and holy, is unconvincing. See L. E. Vaage, 'The Translation of 1 Cor 7: 14c and the Labile Social Body of the Pauline Church', *RB* 116 (2009) 557–71, which also underpins some of the arguments in M. Y. MacDonald and L. E. Vaage, 'Unclean but Holy Children: Paul's Everyday Quandary in 1 Corinthians 7:14c', *CBQ* 73 (2011) 526–46. Paul's other use of ἐπεὶ ἄρα ... νῦν δέ (1 Cor 5.10–11) implies that the former is a hypothetical conclusion that would follow (but does not) if some logically prior condition were true (which it is not) (*pace* Vaage, 'Translation', 565) and the use of the indicative mood (in the sense of 'assumed true for the sake of argument') is unproblematic (and clearly need not indicate a 'true' condition, as Matt 12.27–8 and Rom 11.6 show).

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Scholars have struggled to discern what sense we should give to this status as holy. Gerhard Delling's comment is indicative: 'so viele Köpfe, so viele Sinne'.[48] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, followed broadly by Anthony Thiselton, proposes an ethical interpretation: the unbelieving partner can be described as holy because they exhibit 'a pattern of behaviour that is analogous to the conduct expected of the *hagioi*', specifically by consenting to continue the marriage and thus avoid divorce.[49] Likewise for the children, this holy status is, according to Murphy-O'Connor, based on their behaviour: 'Paul's basis here is the simple fact of experience that children assimilate the behaviour pattern of their parents.'[50] Yet this moralising interpretation is profoundly unconvincing: if the (ethical) holiness of the unbelieving spouse is specifically predicated on their maintaining a marriage and avoiding divorce, then this is clearly not a pattern of behaviour that can (yet) be copied by the children. Indeed, many of the attempted solutions are too much shaped by a desire to avoid finding in Paul a theology at odds with later church conviction, a status for children that, in John O'Neill's words, 'seems to depend neither on belief nor on the sacrament of baptism'.[51] However, a simpler (even if theologically objectionable) solution does much more justice to the function of ἅγιος-language in Paul.

As is well known, ἅγιος is one of the most common Pauline designations for members of the assemblies, frequently used in the opening epistolary greetings (e.g. Rom 1.7; 1 Cor 1.2; 2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1).[52] As 1 Cor 6.1–2 makes clear, it draws the boundary between 'in' and 'out', or between church and world.[53] Ἅγιος functions as a designation of identity, and specifically in relation to this boundary issue: when the circle is drawn to determine in and out, those who are ἅγιος are within the community; they share the identity of insider. Notable here is the difference in Paul's description of the unbelieving spouse and the

48 G. Delling, *Studien zum Neuen Testament und zum hellenistischen Judentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1950–1968* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 257.

49 J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'Works without Faith in 1 Cor., VII, 14', *RB* 84 (1977) 349–61, at 356.

50 Murphy-O'Connor, 'Works', 361. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 530: 'If the spouse falls under the influence of the Christian partner's faith, lifestyle, prayer, and living out of the gospel, how much more shall not [*sic*] the children? … even if only one parent is Christian the children will be marked by an element of shaping and "difference" from the wholly pagan environment.'

51 J. C. O'Neill, '1 Corinthians 7,14 and Infant Baptism', *L'Apôtre Paul: Personnalité, Style et Conception du Ministère* (ed. A. Vanhoye; BETL 73; Leuven: Peeters, 1986) 357–61, at 357.

52 On this self-designation, which is much more frequent in Paul than elsewhere in the NT, see P. Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 122–63.

53 Cf. Horrell, *Solidarity*, 133–65; Trebilco, *Self-Designations*, 135: 'οἱ ἅγιοι functions to establish boundaries *around* the Christian community' (emphasis original).

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children:[54] the former is 'sanctified' (ἡγίασται) by the believer, despite remaining ἄπιστος, such that the union is licit (not immoral) as are its offspring. Only the children are emphatically and unambiguously described as ἅγιος.

Despite his eschatologically motivated preference for singleness and his lack of interest in what was often seen as the key purpose of marriage – to bear children – by setting down the presumption that the children of Christians are holy, Paul is in effect establishing a principle of heredity: children already belong within the Christian community. J. B. Lightfoot puts this clearly and concisely: 'Plainly the children of mixed marriages were regarded as in some sense Christian children. We cannot say more or less than this.'[55] Christian identity is neither patrilineal nor matrilineal, but can be passed on by either parent, since, even in situations of mixed marriage, their holiness is the dominant characteristic.[56] This does not of course rule out the possibility that children may reject this affiliation and apostasise (something also possible for Jews),[57] but it does indicate that the default position, the starting point for their enculturation, is their sharing in the Christian identity of their parent(s) (cf. 2 Tim 1.5). Christians, then, according to Paul, not only share Abraham as their distant ancestor, and thus become fellow-kin in Christ, but also pass this identity on through family, and specifically through the rearing of children.[58] In other words, the broader discourse of sharing

54 *Pace* Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 333, who seems more concerned than Paul to insist that the children's status can only be derived from and dependent on their ongoing link to the (adult) 'believer': 'through their relationship with the believer, who maintains the marriage and thus keeps intact the relationship the children, they too can be understood to be "holy" *in the same way as the unbelieving spouse*' (emphasis added). It is not hard to see that theological convictions shape the exegesis at this point.

55 Lightfoot, *Notes*, 226. Cf. also E.-B. Allo, *Saint Paul: Première Épitre aux Corinthiens* (Paris: Gabalda, 1934²) 168: 'ils [*sc.* vos enfants] sont «saints» (= non impurs), reçu déjà d'une certaine manière dans votre communauté de «saints»'.

56 Cf. the discussion of the shift from a (biblical) patrilineal to a (Mishnaic) matrilineal principle of descent in Judaism in Cohen, *Jewishness*, 263–307.

57 On the issue of Jewish apostasy and its complexities, see J. M. G. Barclay, 'Who Was Considered an Apostate in the Jewish Diaspora?', *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. G. N. Stanton and G. G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 80–98; L. H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 79–83.

58 To some extent this runs counter to a certain Protestant emphasis on the need for each individual to make their own faith-commitment, to have their own conversion experience, but the sociological reality is that children are socialised and enculturated into the religious tradition of their parents. This passage has understandably been a crux for the discussion of infant baptism, despite the fact that it is silent on the issue. Lightfoot (*Notes*, 226) again notes wisely that the passage 'enunciates the principle which leads to infant baptism, viz., that the child of Christian parents shall be treated as a Christian'.

ancestry and kinship is here concretised and instantiated in the smaller-scale context of family life.[59]

In this first generation situation, then, when the Christian movement is expanding primarily through conversion, and without this being either his focus or his intention, Paul expresses two principles and correlative social practices that contribute to the ethnicisation of group-identity: restricting marriage to within the group (endogamy)[60] and establishing Christianness as a form of identity that is passed on to the next generation through the family.

### 3. Household Codes and Mixed Marriage: Ancestry through Virtue and the Christian Way of Life in 1 Peter 3.1–6

The emergence of the household codes in the later Pauline letters and in 1 Peter indicates an increasing focus upon the 'Christian' household as a social grouping, including children, that shares and thus reproduces Christian identity. This is particularly evident in the most complete and formulaic examples, the parallel codes in Col 3.18–4.1 and Eph 5.21–6.9. The direct vocative address to each of the household members – wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, masters – presumes an adherence to the Christian faith on the part of all those addressed, not only in the very fact of the direct address but also in the explicitly Christian motivation given for each group's conduct.[61] Thus, children are to obey their parents because this is pleasing ἐν κυρίῳ (Col 3.20, expanded with a scriptural command and promise in Eph 6.1–3). In Ephesians the admonition to fathers is to raise their children ἐν παιδείᾳ καὶ νουθεσίᾳ κυρίου (Eph 6.4). Here in particular, as John Barclay has pointed out, we find a developing sense of the family as the place for 'the Christian socialisation of children' and 'a key site for the practice of a distinctly Christian life-style'.[62]

59 If the vicarious baptism referred to in the notoriously enigmatic 1 Cor 15.29 is undertaken for deceased family members (e.g. parents), who died before converting, as seems likely, then this is evidence of a kind of retrospective incorporation of such family members into the 'people' in Christ, a point I owe to Francis Watson. Cf. also Concannon, *When You Were Gentiles*, 166–9.

60 Needless to say, this does not mean (as in other groups, ethnic or otherwise) that Christians unanimously accepted or practised this principle, but it does become a prominent influence on subsequent custom. On the differences in practice, see Johnson Hodge, 'Mixed Marriage'.

61 On this unusually direct appeal, see e.g. the recent comments of M. Y. MacDonald, *The Power of Children: The Construction of Christian Families in the Greco-Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014) 7, 18.

62 J. M. G. Barclay, 'The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity', *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (ed. H. Moxnes; London/New York: Routledge, 1997) 66–80, at 76–7, though cast, one should note, under the rubric of the family as 'bearer of religion' rather than of ethnicity (but see p. 69 for Judaism as 'fundamentally an ethnic tradition'). On Josephus' concern for the education of children in Judaism, see MacDonald, *Power*, 15, 77; *C.Ap.* 1.60; 2.173–4; 2.204, 206.

The household code in 1 Peter takes a distinctive form: only domestic slaves, wives and husbands are addressed, the last group comparatively briefly.[63] The exhortation to wives shares with 1 Cor 7.12–16 a particular concern with mixed marriages, and also a sense – more developed in 1 Peter – that such marriages are an opportunity for mission and conversion (1 Cor 7.16; 1 Pet 3.1–2).[64] There is none of Paul's concern with divorce and separation. Mixed marriages are by no means exclusively the author's focus, and his exhortation applies to all marriages;[65] but mixed marriages are of particular concern because in such cases there is a stronger risk that women will suffer hostility and abuse due to their following different religious customs to those of the *paterfamilias* (cf. 3.6).[66] The concern with suffering is central to 1 Peter as a whole.

Two features of the text are of particular interest: its focus on a 'way of life' (ἀναστροφή) and the connections drawn between conduct and ancestry. Twice in the opening two verses the wives' manner of living is described as an ἀναστροφή. This term can bear a wide variety of meanings, but in its NT usage (confined to the epistles) it refers consistently to behaviour, conduct or way of life.[67] In the undisputed Pauline letters it appears only once, significantly, where Paul describes his former 'way of life' in Judaism: τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ (Gal 1.13). In the LXX it appears only three times, two of which are in 2 Maccabees (5.8; 6.23). In one of these instances it also indicates, by implication, the Jewish way of life:[68] in 2 Macc 6.23 Eleazar's refusal to be compelled to eat pork is said to reflect a resolve worthy of his excellent ἀναστροφή from childhood (τῆς ἐκ παιδὸς καλλίστης ἀναστροφῆς). In the following verse he is said to insist on this, lest any of the young think he has gone over (μεταβεβηκέναι) εἰς ἀλλοφυλισμόν – which the NRSV translates 'to an alien

63 The key study remains that of D. L. Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (SBLMS 26; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981).

64 See further MacDonald, *Early Christian Women*, 189–204.

65 *Pace* F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970[3] [1947]) 153; likewise P. J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1996) 209–10. J. H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 557 more correctly interprets the force of καὶ εἴ τινες: 'The conditional formulation "even if" (*kai ei*) indicates that the author allows for the fact that "some" (*tines*) of the husbands mentioned in v 1b may be nonbelievers.'

66 See further Balch, *Wives*, 81–105; Johnson Hodge, 'Holy Wives'; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 557–8; Plutarch, *Mor.* 140D; Tertullian, *Ad Uxor.* 2.4–5.

67 On the variety of meanings, see LSJ s.v. NT references are: Gal 1.13; Eph 4.22; 1 Tim 4.12; Heb 13.7; Jas 3.13; 1 Pet 1.15, 18; 2.12; 3.1, 2, 16; 2 Pet 2.7; 3.11.

68 In 2 Macc 5.8 it seems to mean something like 'reversal of fortune'; so T. Muraoka, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009) 46.The other reference is in a series of admonitions addressed to the παιδίον in Tob 4.14 (only in $G^{I}$, the shorter text-form), where it refers to a pattern of conduct: ἴσθι πεπαιδευμένος ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ σου ('be disciplined in all your conduct' (RSV)).

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religion',[69] but which clearly conveys a broader ethno-cultural sense, of going over to the customs and practices of a different people-group (cf. 2 Macc 4.13).[70]

The word ἀναστροφή is a particular favourite of the author of 1 Peter: six of its thirteen NT uses are in this letter, where it denotes both a futile past way of life as ἔθνη, received from one's ancestors (1.18 (ἐκ τῆς ματαίας ὑμῶν ἀναστροφῆς πατροπαραδότου); cf. 4.2–3 (τὸ βούλημα τῶν ἐθνῶν); Eph 4.22) and, by contrast, the holy and good way of life that is required for the people of God (1.15; 2.12; 3.1–2). Of course, reference to an ἀναστροφή does not *ipso facto* denote an ethnic or racial group, though it does encapsulate one key feature of ethnic identity, namely what is perceived to be a 'common culture', usually including such things as 'religion, customs, or language'.[71] But at the very least, if Paul and 2 Maccabees can speak of Judaism as an ἀναστροφή, from which one might conceivably turn, to the customs and way of life of another people (εἰς ἀλλοφυλισμόν), while 1 Peter can speak of his addressees as having turned from their ancestral ἀναστροφή to an ἀναστροφή ἐν Χριστῷ (3.16), then we might have cause to wonder whether the group-identities thus constructed are 'as unlike as chalk and cheese' or whether they in fact share significant characteristics, rooted in the sense of a people's way of life. We might see 1 Peter's stress on the adoption of this ἀναστροφή ἐν Χριστῷ as another contribution to the ethnicisation process: the construction of a sense of being a people who share a common set of customs and practices.

The ἀναστροφή to which the wives are summoned is also linked in a positive way with claims to ancestry. Just as the old, worthless ἀναστροφή was inherited from ancestors (1.18), so the new ἀναστροφή is aligned with an ancestral lineage. In his attempt to legitimate the pattern of conduct demanded of the wives – especially their submission to husbands – the author appeals to 'the holy women of old', particularly Sarah (3.5–6). These women also submitted to their husbands, the author claims, though the specific assertion that 'Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him κυρίος' is very hard to derive from the text of Genesis (cf. Gen 16.2!).[72] Insofar as they do good and fear no terror – that is, follow the central

69 Joachim Schaper (*NETS*, 511) evades the difficulty of translation by rendering it 'allophylism', though a footnote glosses this as 'alien ways'.

70 In 4.13, the word's only other occurrence in the LXX, ἀλλοφυλισμός stands alongside Ἑλληνισμός. Muraoka (*Lexicon*, 29) suggests 'alien, foreign culture'.

71 Cf. the features of an ethnic group listed by Hutchinson and Smith, 'Introduction', 6–7. As Weber ('Race Relations', 366) remarks, shared language and religious beliefs do not necessarily define 'ethnic' groups, but 'a shared language and, after that, a common pattern of ritual regulation of life, based on shared religious conceptions, everywhere play an exceptionally important part in creating feelings of "ethnic" affinity'.

72 Apart from Gen 18.12, where Sarah says 'my master is old' (ὁ δὲ κύριός μου πρεσβύτερος) there is nowhere where she is depicted in these terms. Gen 16.2 gives a contrary impression: ὑπήκουσεν δὲ Αβραμ τῆς φωνῆς Σαρας. The addressing of Abraham as κύριος is much

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demands of ἡ ἀγαθή ἐν Χριστῷ ἀναστροφή (3.16) – they show themselves to be Sarah's descendants (3.6). The aorist verb ἐγενήθητε may point to the event of conversion and/or of baptism/initiation, but the participial phrase – ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι καὶ μὴ φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν (3.6) – also carries a sense of exhortation and conditionality: identity as Sarah's children is displayed by exhibiting a pattern of behaviour like hers, and, by implication, depends upon continuing to do so.[73] Furthermore, while the specific focus here is clearly upon the wives within the Christian community, the generic designation τέκνα, not θυγατέρες (despite many translations),[74] allows the possibility that all the addressees, insofar as they follow the approved pattern of conduct, may be regarded as Sarah's descendants (cf. Gal 4.26–31). This is particularly so given that the pattern of conduct here demanded of wives is to a considerable degree demanded also of the whole community in 3.13–17; the wives, like the domestic slaves, are in a sense paradigmatic.[75]

The conviction exhibited *in nuce* here – that a form of (ethnic) identity based on ancestry and descent might be determined by patterns of conduct and way of life – is closely paralleled in antiquity, not least in Jewish texts. Isocrates' statement from around 380 BCE famously redefines Hellenicity/Greekness in terms of shared culture rather than shared origin: 'the name "Greek" (τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὄνομα)

more prominent in the Testament of Abraham, as Troy Martin has shown. See T. W. Martin, 'The TestAbr and the Background of 1 Pet 3,6', *ZNW* 90 (1999) 139–46.

73 Commentators have debated how exactly to understand the participial phrase: J. R. Michaels, *1 Peter* (WBC 49; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988) 166 takes the participles as imperatival in force; a conditional sense is favoured by Beare, *1 Peter,* 157. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 216, interprets them as participles of 'attendant circumstance', with effectively a temporal sense; while Elliott, *1 Peter*, 573 suggests that the participles 'describe the present conduct and confidence consequent upon becoming Sarah's spiritual children through conversion'. L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993) 224 insists that the participles 'express not the *ground* but a *demonstration* of this relationship to Sarah' (emphasis original); but there is nonetheless some conditionality bound up with this demonstration – this lifestyle is, in a sense, constitutive of their identity as Sarah's children. Cf. also J. Schlosser, *La première épître de Pierre* (CBNT 21; Paris: Cerf, 2011) 191.

74 Among older translations: Geneva, Tyndale, KJV, LutherBibel [1912]; among recent translations: NIV, NRSV (a change from RSV), LutherBibel [1984].

75 See further D. G. Horrell, 'Fear, Hope, and Doing Good: Wives as a Paradigm of Mission in 1 Peter', *Estudios Biblicos* 73 (2015) 409–29. There is a series of close parallels between 3.1–6 and 3.13–17: pattern of conduct (3.1–2 // 3.16); fear (3.2 // 3.16); the heart (3.4 // 3.15); gentleness (3.4 // 3.16); hope (3.5 // 3.15); doing good (3.6 // 3.17); not being afraid (3.6 // 3.14). These are noted by Elliott, *1 Peter*, 619 with n. 230, who elsewhere makes the point about the domestic slaves being paradigms (*1 Peter*, 523), and set out in detail by J. K. Brown, 'Silent Wives, Verbal Believers: Ethical and Hermeneutical Considerations in 1 Peter 3:1–6 and its Context', *W&W* 24 (2004) 395–403, at 396–7. As Michaels, *1 Pete*r, 166 remarks: 'Nothing in this statement applies exclusively to women'; likewise, Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 217.

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seems no longer to connote the race (μηκέτι τοῦ γένους) but the mental attitude (ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας), and people are called "Greeks" who share our culture (τῆς παιδεύσεως τῆς ἡμετέρας) rather than our common origin (τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως)' (Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 50).[76] Denise Eileen McCoskey, for example, sees this as one indication that 'cultural practice gained increasing authority in defining racial categories', though she also notes the 'tensions and uncertainties that continued to accompany this shift, producing enduring concern over the relative roles of essence and practice'.[77]

Also emphasising cultural practice and way of life as crucial for establishing relationship and affinity is Josephus's remark in *Contra Apionem*: 'To all who desire to come and live under the same laws with us, he [*sc.* our legislator, Moses] gives a gracious welcome, holding that it is not race alone (οὐ τῷ γένει μόνον) which constitutes relationship (οἰκειότης) but also the deliberate choice of a way of life (ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ προαιρέσει τοῦ βιοῦ)' (*C. Ap.* 2.210).[78]

76 Contrast the earlier 'definition' of Greekness offered by Herodotus 8.144, which, interestingly, mentions 'kinship in blood and speech', religion (gods and sacrifices) and way of life, but significantly, as Suzanne Saïd notes, omits 'shared territory and shared history'. S. Saïd, 'The Discourse of Identity in Greek Rhetoric from Isocrates to Aristides', *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Identity* (ed. I. Malkin; Centre for Hellenic Studies Colloquia 5; Washington, DC/Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2001) 275–99, at 275. For Jonathan Hall, Herodotus' statement already indicates a promotion of 'cultural criteria (including language and religion) to the same level as kinship' (p. 193) and is part of a process by which Hellenic identity shifted in the fifth–fourth centuries BCE from an ethnic basis towards a cultural basis. See J. M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), esp. 172–228. Esler, by contrast, insists that 'a transition from ancestry to culture and language does not solemnize the disintegration of Greek ethnicity, but simply represents an alteration in the cultural indicia by which the boundaries of that ethnic group are negotiated' (*Conflict and Identity*, 57) – though it is a misrepresentation to claim that Hall's case 'rests on a single passage in Isocrates' (*Conflict and Identity*, 56). I do not need to adjudicate that debate here, however, since the crucial point for my argument is that Greekness, whatever it is (like Jewishness, as we shall see below), is here being defined in ways that suggest commonalities with 1 Peter's depiction of Christian identity and social practice.

77 D. E. McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity and its Legacy* (Ancients and Moderns; London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 63. Cf. also Saïd, 'Discourse of Identity'; D. Konstan, '*To Hellēnikon ethnos:* Ethnicity and the Construction of Ancient Greek Identity', in Malkin, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, 29–50.

78 The context for these remarks is that of the welcome offered to proselytes ('those who choose to share our ways' (2.209; Barclay's Eng. trans.)), and as Barclay comments (J. M. G. Barclay, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, vol. X: *Against Apion* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 291–2 n. 847), 'it is notable that choice is an aspect of affinity *supplementary* to birth, not its *antithesis*', a point Barclay sees as indicating that Judaism remains here 'an ethnic tradition' (p. 292), but one which, as he notes elsewhere, proselytes could join so as 'to acquire in effect a new "ethnicity" in kinship and custom' (emphasis original). J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) 408.

Philo, with his focus on the importance of virtue, comes even closer to 1 Peter in his stress on ancestral identity as defined and, indeed, gained or lost through the practice of virtue: in *De virtutibus* he remarks, on the one hand, on those among 'the founders of the [Jewish] race' who did not profit from 'the virtues of their ancestors (αἱ τῶν προγόνων ἀρεταί)' and, by failing to reproduce these virtues, were 'denied any part in the grandeur of their noble birth (εὐγενεία)' (*Virt.* 206–7). On the other hand, he depicts Abraham, the founder of the Jewish people, as leaving behind the vices of his ancestors – indeed, leaving his race (γενεά) itself – to attain true virtue (*Virt.* 211–16). Thus he can enunciate the principle that 'kinship is not measured only by blood, but by similarity of conduct and pursuit of the same objects' (τὸ συγγενὲς οὐχ αἵματι μετρεῖται μόνον … ἀλλὰ πράξεων ὁμοιότητι καὶ θήρᾳ τῶν αὐτῶν, *Virt.* 195 (Colson, LCL)).

In these sources too there is an unstable combination of blood and practice in defining identity; both remain of significance, though how exactly they relate remains unclear. In the context of the earliest Christian movement, it is understandable that the discourse of ancestry focuses heavily on notions of adoption, practice and shared faith; but the move we saw already in Paul to define the children of Christians as 'holy' means that blood and flesh can soon enough start to play a part in the conception and transmission of Christianness.

## 4. Conclusions and Critical Reflections

A study of just two particular texts focused on issues relating to marriage and family can, of course, make only a small contribution to our understanding of the character of emergent Christian identity, and of how it compares with Jewish identities in the period. I have not paid much attention to the broader themes of ancestry and peoplehood, evident, for example, in Paul's insistence that all in Christ are Abraham's seed (Gal 3.29), or in 1 Peter's emphatic declaration that Christians are now a chosen race, a holy nation, God's own people (1 Pet 2.9–10).[79] But by attending to texts which deal with the 'small-scale' contexts of family and household, I have sought to add insights into the development of norms and social practices which contribute crucially to the ethnicisation of Christian identity. In 1 Corinthians 7 we find two particularly significant points: that the norm of practice is endogamy, marriage within the group, and that Christianness is in effect a group-identity into which children are born. The later household codes reinforce this construction of a Christian household,

79 On this latter point, see D. G. Horrell, '"Race", "Nation", "People": Ethnic Identity-Construction in 1 Peter 2.9', *NTS* 58 (2012) 123–43, revised and expanded in D. G. Horrell, *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity* (LNTS/ECC 394; London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013) 133–63.

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where children are reared in the faith. In 1 Peter 3.1–6 we find one indication that conversion to the Christ-group entails the adoption of a new way of life and bequeaths a certain ancestry which is, however, dependent on displaying a particular pattern of conduct. Moreover, the idea that identity – even ethnic identity – is intrinsically and contingently bound up with the adoption and practice of a way of life is evident in other sources and traditions from the period, not least in Judaism.

We should not, however, hastily and simplistically conclude that early Christian identity 'is' therefore 'ethnic', or that the early Christian groups were 'ethnic groups'; such box-like categorisation is unlikely to be either cogent or illuminating.[80] Indeed, as my opening remarks suggested, it is much more likely that the categories are fuzzy and overlapping: ethnic, religious, cultural and social facets of group-identity intersect in complex ways.[81] What is more relevant is the conclusion that in both discursive and practical ways, the texts we have examined indicate how ethnic categories and features are deployed in the construction of Christian group-identity and that it is apposite to speak of this identity-construction as in some respects a form of ethnicisation, 'the making of a people'.[82] Given the constraints of time and space I have done very little to develop the comparisons and differences with the various constructions of

80 Hence, for example, Barclay (*Against Apion*, lv with n. 137) expresses caution about Esler's use of Anthony Smith's criteria (cf. n. 21 above) as 'a template of ethnicity', insisting that 'we need to attend carefully to the precise ingredients of the image of "Judeans" … without prior assumptions about what must, or must not, be embraced by this term'. Esler responds that 'Barclay misunderstands the use of a social-scientific perspective in biblical interpretation'. The criteria used 'merely raise questions to put to the text, to which it must supply responsive data; they do not prescribe any particular conclusion' (P. F. Esler, 'Judean Ethnic Identity in Josephus' *Against Apion*', in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne* (ed. Z. Rodgers, M. Daly-Denton, A. Fitzpatrick McKinley; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009) 73–91, at 76 n. 9). Yet there remains the risk that the use of such a list to categorise a group as 'ethnic' (or not) may mean that insufficient attention is paid to the varying ways in which features of identity – ethnic and other – are presented and deployed in different social and discursive contexts: ethnicity, like many other facets of social identity, is a fluid and highly diverse category, often interwoven with other facets of identity, such as religion, culture, language, nationality, and so on. We must attend to each and every distinctive articulation or construction of identity with due consideration for their particularity.

81 The theory of intersectionality is one influential attempt to grasp such interconnections, insofar as they combine to create multiple facets of disadvantage and inequality (especially in the triple combination of race, gender and class). For an overview of this approach and its application to biblical studies, see U. E. Eisen, C. Gerber, A. Standhartinger, 'Doing Gender – Doing Religion: Zur Frage nach der Intersektionalität in den Bibelwissenschaften. Eine Einleitung', in *Doing Gender – Doing Religion: Fallstudien zur Intersektionalität im frühen Judentum, Christentum und Islam* (ed. U. E. Eisen, C. Gerber, A. Standhartinger; WUNT 302; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 1–33.

82 Cf. Cornell and Hartman, *Ethnicity and Race*, 35, quoted above.

Jewish identity in the period. But without in any way denying the significant differences, even these brief case studies are, I hope, enough to suggest that – in terms of the sense of being a people, rooted in certain ancestral figures and passed on through the family, defined by commitment to a certain way of life, in which both proselytism and apostasy are possible – it is highly questionable, however exactly we classify them, to regard Jewish and Christian identities as simply incommensurable, as categorically distinct as those of Brazilians and Bridge-players.

If this category distinction – and the broader dichotomy between Jewish ethnicity and Christian inclusivity – is open to serious question, then it remains, finally, to return briefly to the broader issues with which the paper began and to ask why it is that such a distinction is so enduring and attractive to scholars of the New Testament. I can make only brief and tentative suggestions here. One clear implication of distinguishing Judaism as ethnic and Christianity as trans-ethnic is that the latter can then be depicted as providing an overarching, inclusive, tolerant supra-ethnic basis for belonging, within which other identities can nest and continue. This places Christianity in a literally 'superior' category, 'above' Judaism: Christianity can provide a framework for inclusion, co-existence and tolerance of diversity in ways that an ethnically particular Judaism (supposedly) cannot. Moreover, this very formulation of the Christian achievement is strikingly similar to the goals of the Western liberal-democratic project to create societies in which there is tolerant space for a diversity of cultural and religious identities peacefully to co-exist (beneath an overarching umbrella represented by the values of democracy and freedom). Indeed, depictions of the early Christian vision share with presentations of the modern liberal vision a tendency to downplay the 'intolerant' and inflexible requirements for belonging that apply in both cases.[83] Might it be the case, then, that the tendency to paint a categorical contrast between (ethnic) Judaism and (trans-ethnic) Christianity and to depict the achievements and potential of the latter in terms of open and tolerant

83 To take recent instances from my own context: Prime Minister David Cameron insists that freedom and tolerance are core British values (e.g. BBC news, 15 June 2014), while also declaring that Britain is a Christian country (BBC news, 16 April 2014). He has also been explicit about the need for a 'muscular liberalism' that shows stronger intolerance of (certain kinds of) intolerance (see www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference, delivered 2011, accessed 30 June 2015). Currently there is the possibility that vocal opposition to those values may itself be criminalised: in proposing new legislation to combat extremism, the British government has apparently defined extremism as 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' (*New York Times*, 13 May 2015; available at: www.nytimes.com/2015/05/14/world/europe/david-cameron-combat-muslim-extremism-britain.html?_r=0, accessed 20 May 2015). Cf. also *The Guardian*, 13 May 2015 (available at: www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/13/theresa-mays-counter-extremism-proposals-are-fraught-with-difficulties, accessed 20 May 2015).

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inclusion – a picture of early Christianity that approximates to a kind of 'United Nations' vision[84] – reflects the dominant location of New Testament scholarship in the traditionally Christian countries of the Western world?[85] Let me turn the question around and ask: Is it not likely, inevitable even, that our scholarship does reflect its contexts of production, albeit in ways we scarcely recognise or intend? In other words, the social vision of the early Christian achievement produced in New Testament scholarship is – and is intrinsically likely to be – one that reflects both its religious and its ethnic or racial contexts of origin. Religion and race thus continue to be entwined. By finding in earliest Christianity the paradigm of supposedly trans-ethnic inclusion, such scholarship, against its explicitly tolerant and ecumenical intentions, may both reflect and legitimate the assumed superiority of a Christian model of 'tolerant' social inclusion promoted in secularised form – and often with 'intolerant' force – by the globally powerful countries of the white Christian West.

84 Hence, for example, the revealing phraseology in Kathy Ehrensperger's exploration of 'Paul's notion of "united nations in Christ"' ('"United Nations" under Rome or in Christ? Paul's Challenge of Cultural Translation' (Main Paper, British New Testament Conference, University of St Andrews, September 2013), available at: https://lamp.academia.edu/KEhrensperger, accessed 16 July 2015). See further K. Ehrensperger, *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures: Theologizing in the Space-Between* (LNTS 456; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), where she develops the idea that Paul's vision – in contrast to that of Rome (esp. pp. 172–3) – is one where '[u]nity is not achieved by the eradication of cultural and ethnic distinctions, but by affirming their validity and value in Christ' (p. 158).

85 'The Western world' is, of course, a loose and highly contestable designation, but most concisely captures my intended focus.