

**THE APPROPRIATION OF PAULINE SEXUALITIES IN THE  
HOMILIES OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

by

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# DECLARATION

Student number: 765-909-1

I declare that THE APPROPRIATION OF PAULINE SEXUALITY IN THE HOMILIES OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE

L.P. MARX

.....  
DATE

## SUMMARY

Throughout the ages historical text criticism has been used to study texts of ancient authors of Christian ethical values. Two such persons were Paul the apostle and John Chrysostom. This study shows that text historical criticism is not without problems. The problem lays not so much in the idea of historical text criticism, but how it was and is still being applied today, it is never without bias.

This use of the texts of Paul and Chrysostom who were both very outspoken on the subject of sexuality has caused great amounts of emotional and in cases also physical pain to people who misapplied historical text criticism and as Martin and others have effectively shown, any such interpretation of text that has a intention to hurt people cannot be the right method.

Ancient sexuality worked and was constructed completely different from the sexuality of modernity. The way gender was appropriated in ancient times, the way sexuality was construed and applied were set against a wholly different context and set of rules than that of the current day. This becomes clear in Roman and Hellenistic sexuality that is discussed in detail in this study. Unlike modern times, the ancients did not have a simplistic two-sex model that was based on biological sex, in their world, one's actions determined one's sex. Both Paul and Chrysostom were very well educated people, they were aware of philosophic thought in their day and took these thoughts into account whilst saying and writing what they did.

Paul was at heart a dedicated Pharisee who only later turned toward Christianity. He was well acquainted with Jewish sexual ethics; he had an absolute repulsion towards any form of desire, which he believed led to many other sins. His writings available to us should not be seen as biographies but as letters intended to be arguments with very good rhetoric and diatribe, written with the goal of achieving to convince the receiver or listener. He was extremely conservative in his viewpoint on sex, if he could have had his way, no sexual contact between any person would have existed, but he realised that not everybody had the same gifts he had. This point of view was mostly because of his eschatological worldview, for Paul when you became a

Christian you became a slave of God and you were no longer a slave of any passions, so much the more, the passions of the flesh.

Chrysostom, who lived almost four hundred years later, had a great veneration for Paul. He basically shared all Paul's views on sexuality, although not always for the same reasons. Chrysostom was however, in his way also eschatological. His life, like that of Paul was caught up in many confrontations, which had an influence on the way he thought and the things he had opinions on. Chrysostom, like Paul preferred the ascetic lifestyle not only for himself but for everyone, he believed that marriage accompanied death—both spiritual and physical in the end. He so much clung to the ideas of Paul, that a sort of "Paulism" developed. Chrysostom, however noble his sayings might come across did not always have the purest of motive, some of the things he did or say was to achieve a certain political goal, even if it was just to gain more power for the church. This is one aspect that should be kept in mind when studying his texts.

Unfortunately, for many people, many misinterpretations, be it willingly/intentionally, many mistranslations of key words on the Bible (like the word *malakos*) have been made. What so ever the intention—be it to propagate popular social sexual propaganda, or whatever—this is and was not right. Like mentioned many people has experience hurt because of this. Rhetorical text analysis is being set forward as an alternative to historical text criticism in a slight but hopeful effort to overcome this problem and enable the churches of today to welcome many more Christians into their families.

#### KEYTERMS

Paul; Chrysostom; Sex; Gender; Sexuality; Gender; Desire; Ancient; Philosophy; Control; Modern; Church; Corinthians; Roman; Jewish; Eroticism; Bias; Antioch; Constantinople; Homoeroticism

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all those who have suffered due to same-sex eros

### **Vreemde Liefde**

As ek my vreemde liefde bloot moes lê,  
Wat sou die vrome skenders van die skoonheid sê?  
Sou hul, met heilige verontwaardiging,  
Besoedelende vingers God-waarts steek,  
En na dié die self-regverdigende reiniging  
Hul eer aan my kom wreek?  
Of sou 'n sprank van hierdie vuur wat in my gloei  
Ook hulle aanraak, sodat hul verstaan  
Die liefde neem 'n duisend vorme aan?

ID du Plessis 1937

### ***Strange Love***

*Should my strange love be completely bared  
Would I, by the holy keepers of purity, be spared  
Or will they, in self-denial, call for retribution from their God  
And after such self-redeeming cleansing  
Avenge their honour at my expense  
Or, would a spark of this fire which in me glows  
Touch their hearts so that they will realise  
Love's guises can in thousand fold materialise?*

Translated by Rudi Basson 2002

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### CONCLUSION

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Through the ages the references to homosexuality in the Bible, particularly Romans 1 have led to a lot of heartache and unhappiness amongst gay, bi-sexual and lesbian persons-who are often members of the church (Martin 2006:50). Martin is of the opinion that an interpretation of the Bible that “hurts people, oppresses people or destroys people cannot be the right interpretation, no matter how traditional, historical or exegetically respectable” (Martin 2006:50).

D’Angelo (1990:78–106) has clearly proven that the Bible should not be dealt with as a rulebook unchanged by the historical context endorsed by modern-day Christians. One should consequently be very cautious when trying to find confirmation for answers to ethical questions or support from early texts that were intended to communicate a message to a receiver living in a different time, in very different situations.

According to Martin (2006:17) the manner in which historical criticism has been managed to find a “universal” Christian meaning of biblical texts has not been accomplished. Historical criticism has failed to furnish solutions to the meaning of texts in their ancient frameworks and this has made the application of these texts for modern ethical purposes even more problematic. Martin (2006:18) also recommends that rhetorical analysis should rather be applied and in doing so, one should regard texts as language that leads to conviction. Martin (2006:25) states: “I am not arguing that scripture is irrelevant for ethical reflection. It simply cannot be used in the modern foundationalist way with the expectation that reliably secure ethical guidance will result.” The text becomes more important than the possible meaning of the text, which is called biblical “foundationalism” (not to be confused with “fundamentalism”; see Martin 2006:23). The Bible therefore does not “speak” on its own - it is made to “speak” by the reader or interpreter.

This has direct implications for how we understand sexual ethics, as Martin's (2006) entire book points out. Now many modern scholars, like Hays (1995:389), are of the opinion that the aetiology of homosexuality can be found in the fall of sin from the time of Adam and Eve, and he is quite critical of homosexuality. In his book *Sex and the Single Saviour* (2006), on the other hand, Martin reasons that when Paul was writing Romans 1 he intended to explain that people, although they had knowledge of God, consciously and deliberately chose to ignore this knowledge and preferred to worship idols (made after the image of men or animals), and as a result of this polytheism, God then decided to give them over to be consumed by their passions which might have led to same-sex coupling. Martin states: "homosexuality was the punishment meted out by God for the sin of idolatry and polytheism." (Martin 2006:53). Martin explains that Paul presupposed a Jewish mythological narrative in trying to establish the origins of polytheism and idolatry. This was due to the Jewish tradition of the day that tried to explain many of the behaviours of gentiles of the ancient world at the hand of some turn in humanity that followed the fall of Adam. Strangely though, same-sex relations are never mentioned by name in any of these narratives, but sexual immorality often features (Martin 2006:53). What the Jews and Jewish Christians were doing was simply to try and find answers to the wrongs in the society they lived in. For Paul, same-sex passion operated within a complex and intricate "ecology" of vice.

Homophobic interpretations of Paul were common in early Christianity. This study is specifically concerned with how the fourth-century homilist John Chrysostom read and applied Pauline teachings on sexuality in his preaching. Chrysostom was one of the most famous interpreters of Paul in late antiquity and examining his views on this topic will contribute to a better understanding of heterosexism and same-sex eroticism as Christianity developed. Heterosexism relies on the presupposition that monotheism existed exclusively before idolatry and polytheism to maintain their "judgement" of homosexuality (Martin 2006:55). According to Beatty, Jung and Smith (1993:13–14), heterosexism is "a reasoned system of bias regarding sexual orientation. It denotes prejudice in favour of heterosexual people and connotes prejudice against bisexual and, especially, homosexual people ... it is rooted in a largely cognitive constellation of beliefs about human sexuality". Heterosexism further maintains "heterosexuality is *the* normative form of human sexuality. It is the

measure by which all other sexual orientations are judged” (Jung & Smith 1993:13–14). By understanding what and why both Paul and Chrysostom said what they had to say about sexuality and sexual normativity we might find answers to our own predispositions and questions on these matters, and for this reason it is worthwhile to undertake a study on this topic.

Finally, a caution: we must bear in mind that modern terminologies do not appropriately describe ancient sexual activity. For the ancients the concepts of homosexuality or even heterosexuality, as sexual orientations in the modern sense, did not really exist. The world of sexual activity was divided on the basis of an active and a passive partner (Walters 1997:29–45). An active partner might have been acceptable in the form of a Roman male citizen or unacceptable in the form of a woman performing fellatio because this could have been seen as being in an active position. This distinction between activity and passivity will be discussed in more detail in the course of this chapter, but it should be kept in mind whenever any ancient text concerning sexuality is studied, other factors and not only same sex-passion become important, such as one’s willingness to be subject to someone else of a different gender or class. Social hierarchy is very important in ancient concepts of sexuality. However difficult it is to distinguish between our modern concept of heteronormativity which according to the “laws” of Foucault is kept intact by the existence of something such as modern homosexuality, many other factors such as the role of lust, desire, and normativity should be kept in mind when the texts of Paul and other early Christian writers are studied. In this study, terms such as homosexuality or heteronormativity will be used simply to describe abstract concepts that are hard to describe in a language context where these concept did not exist. Whenever a term related to homosexuality or heterosexuality is used in this study, it is done with this caution that there is some dissonance between ancient concepts of sex and those of the modern era.

## 1.2 STATUS QUAESTIONIS

In current New Testament scholarship, there are several views on Pauline heterosexism. I will refer to Hays and Martin to illustrate two of the dominant views in scholarship. Hays (1995:385) opines that Paul paradoxically reverses the cause and consequence: moral perversion is the result of God's wrath, not the reason for it. Hays (1995:385) further states that: "[T]he heaping up of depravities serves to demonstrate Paul's evaluation of humanity as deeply implicated in 'ungodliness and wickedness'". According to Hays, in Romans 1, Paul portrays homosexual behaviour as a sacrament of the anti-religion of humans who refuse to honour God. Taking part in homosexual activity is displaying a rejection of the almightiness of God. Homosexual behaviour, he states, is not a provocation of the wrath of God but is a consequence of God's decision to give up rebellious thinkers to their own desires. This is the result of the fall of humanity. Men and women are meant for each other and when one departs from this "natural" order one has exchanged the truth of God for a lie (Hays 1995:386). Homosexual activity will not incur God's punishment; it is punishment in its own right. Paul treats all homosexual activity as prime evidence of humanity's tragic confusion and alienation from God. Hays (1995:389) also states that Paul, in Romans 2:1, condemns all unbelievers who judge upon others because they bring judgment upon themselves. For Paul self-righteous judgment of homosexuality is just as sinful as the homosexual behaviour itself. This, however, does not mean that Paul condones all evils mentioned in Romans 1:24–32, but it goes to show that no one could presume himself/herself to be above God's judgment. As a judgement and punishment of God, same-sex passion becomes something different and unnatural in its *quality*, a deviation from the norm set in the Garden of Eden.

However, as Martin (2006:56) notes, the absence in Paul's language of any reference to "unnatural desire" is understandable when we place him into the context of the ancient rather than modern notions of homosexual sex. Heterosexist scholarship on Romans 1 is also inconsistent in its assumption that Paul not only addresses the question of homosexual activity, but also provides an explanation for the existence of homosexual desire. In verse 24 Paul says that God "gave them up in the desires of their hearts to uncleanness with the result that they dishonour their

bodies in themselves”. Paul writes in verse 26 that males “burned in yearning for one another”. Note that Paul only uses the term “contrary to nature” or “unnatural” when he refers to actions, not desires. In contrast to the implications of Hays’ argument, Martin therefore concludes that homosexual desire, in Paul’s thought, is not so much an issue of quality but of quantity-same-sex passion is unnatural in its excess, but it is not (yet, at this historical juncture) a different *kind* of desire.

This leads to the question of whether Romans 1 has been (ab)used by both early Christians, like Chrysostom, and modern Christians in setting a heterosexist norm, which would eventually lead, in our own day, to the exclusion of gay persons from the supposedly welcoming arms of the Church. To what account Chrysostom contributed to the creation of this kind of norm and normaliser is the main focus of this study. Harper, in his *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (2013:147), positions Chrysostom as perhaps one of the first to speak of same-sex passion as a different *type* of desire (as opposed to an excess of “general” desire). Harper’s conclusion will be tested in the present study.

If we proceed, more specifically, to scholarship on Chrysostom’s views of human sexuality - which is the main focus of this study-the work of Clark is especially foundational. According to Clark (1977a:5), in Chrysostom’s thought on sexuality, a certain theme remains important, namely that in a person’s personal life, absolute “sober” judgment and reasoning need to dominate the wits and the desires of the body. Chrysostom was fond of using the theme of dominance and submission to describe the relationship of men toward women. It was important that the natural order and hierarchy was kept in place in order for society to function (Clark 1977a:5). He maintains the point of view that if Eve had not succumbed to sin, women would not have been “enslaved” to males and would still have been free (see also De Wet 2015:222–223). In Chrysostom’s opinion God created man to His image, but women to the image of man (Clark 1997:6–8). This rule of creation also established a social hierarchy, the male was superior to and ruler of the female.

Chrysostom, in many of his homilies however, in contrast to many of the other Church Fathers, maintain the opinion that God held the devil responsible for the fall of Adam and Eve and that Christ came to redeem humankind from the sinful nature it

took after the fall (*Homily 1 on Genesis*; in Hill 1985:20–28; *Homily 10 on Romans*; *Baptismal Instructions 2–3*; see also Heaney-Hunter 1988:152).<sup>1</sup> In Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instruction 3*, he teaches that the newly baptized should remain blameless in God's sight and should avoid committing the sins of their former lives. The purpose of marriage, according to Chrysostom (*Homily 19 on 1 Corinthians 3*) was to help those who could not restrain their lusts and remain chaste (see also Heaney-Hunter 1988:198). Although Chrysostom insists that a woman was inferior to a man in the normal hierarchy of life, there was one instance where this was not true, where men and women were equal, namely in the obligation that extramarital sexual experiences was as forbidden for men as for women, in contrast to popular Graeco-Roman culture (Clark 1997:9).

Chrysostom's view on "homosexuality" as it existed in the ancient world, especially his views on licentiousness, becomes obvious although in a non-direct way in his *Sermons against the Jews*, as Drake's (2013) work has shown. Chrysostom was very intolerant of Jews and Christian Judaizers; he used the Jews as caricatures by which he could sexualise religious and cultural borderlines and heighten the threat of border-crossing (Drake 2013:86). He specifically stresses the general immorality of the Jews in his accusations of sexual excess and violence. In his *Sermon 1 against the Jews* 2.7, 3.1, and 6.8 we find references to Jewish men as "soft" (*malakoi*), lustful and even bestial. Jewish women were portrayed as prostitutes (*pornai*) and the synagogue as a brothel (Drake 2013:86). At the outset, then, we see that Chrysostom's sexual slander against Jews and Judaizers links sexual immorality (*porneia*) with various terms related to same-sex passion and effeminacy—a similar ecology of vice that is found in Paul.

The only study that is specifically devoted to Chrysostom's views on same-sex passion is the article of De Wet, "John Chrysostom on Homoeroticism" (2014). De Wet demonstrates that in order to understand Chrysostom's views on same-sex passion, one has to read it within his broader framework of marriage. This

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<sup>1</sup> All translations of Chrysostom's works are indicated after the primary source reference. In instances where no translation is explicitly referenced, the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF)* series, edited by Schaff (1886–1900), was used. The translations of the *NPNF* are available online at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers>. One limitation in this study is the fact that I do not have any tertiary training in classical Greek. This has led to my often having to rely on a lexicon, or make use of different secondary sources and translations to fully understand the meaning of an ancient Greek or Latin word or text.

observation is consistent with the aims of the current dissertation, which looks at the appropriation of Pauline sexualities as a whole in Chrysostom's thought. One cannot understand Chrysostom's thought on same-sex passion without knowing how he interprets Paul's commands related to marriage. De Wet (2014:215) notes:

Marriage (or at least marriageability) is the defining feature of gender differentiation. Marriage almost becomes a synonym for the natural relations between men and women. Of course, Chrysostom believed that remaining unmarried was an even higher form of devotion, but this was not for everyone. Marriage is the natural framework in which not only Chrysostom's idea of gender dynamics function, but it is also the framework he uses to naturalise the concepts of lust and pleasure. If virginity is not an option, these dangerous passions must be cordoned off and contained within the marital relationship.

De Wet (2014:218) shows that Chrysostom sees same-sex passion as the "antithetic parallel" to the marital relationship. De Wet's article, along with the findings of Clark, Heaney-Hunter and Drake will serve as the main secondary sources for this study.

### 1.3 METHODOLOGY AND SOME INITIAL PRESUPPOSITIONS REGARDING ROMAN SEXUALITY

Stone (Stone 2008:14–25) points out that the Bible we read and construct, and interpret it as we read, is a product created by human beings (past and present) and involvement with certain texts in particular. This idea in itself should lead to a sense of discomfort because it directly implies that the "Bible" as well as other relevant texts is something that existed before we started engaging with it. As a result we should have caution when interpreting, deducting or doing hermeneutical studies (Hornsby & Stone 2011:x).

Because of the constructed nature of biblical discourse, in this study, a cultural-historical approach will be used. Cultural historiography is especially focused on social and cultural anthropological aspects of ancient texts, with a notable emphasis on the body and its relationship to structures of power.

Cultural historical research includes what can be termed “multiculturalism” (Burke 2004:141). Cultural historical research is difficult to define precisely and is often clouded by controversy and debate because of many variables. Cultural historians give attention to symbols and these include a huge variety of objects and subjects which are often tangible but many times subjective or even subconscious. The reason why debate is stimulated is because of the fact that symbols both objective and subjective (in the case of this study, texts) are almost never measurable (Burke 2004:3). Cultural historical research often entails anthropological research, in this way involving the archaeology of humans.

A problem that cultural historical research poses is that when one uses the writings of a people of a different time period is that the researcher might get entangled in the trap of treating texts as if they are windows into the period that is being studied. Often texts are fraught with lies or exaggerations which make them inaccurate, but texts from the past are often also able to give insight in a “subconsciousness” of the people involved by means of what they omit in telling (Burke 2004:3–6).

Robbins (Robbins 1996:8) is of the opinion that to do only a cultural historical research has some restriction in the sense that the aim is often to answer difficult historical and theological questions only. These questions are then often asked in order to explain the developments of institutions such as Christianity. The aim of historical research has at its centre constructing history that lies behind texts. As a result of this, the text becomes the primary source of investigation rather than being an object for investigation.

The problem with wilful misinterpretation or appropriating will be discussed throughout this study.

In addition to cultural historical research, gender theory will also be used as a method of research, which will be discussed in more detail. Cultural historical research is also very dependent on gender studies, and so, in this study, gender theory will be applied in order to better understand the conceptual frameworks of the

ancient persons involved. It should always be kept in mind that any text is made up of a complexity of underlying factors.<sup>2</sup>

When idea construction of gender identity formation takes place, it is important to be aware of the fact that at the basis of gender identity formation lies sexual reproductive ability (Jodamus 2015:22). Barker (2002:31) also states that in spite of the fact that individuals are aware of their biological sex, it is other factors that determine their gender identification like language, culture, and discourse pertaining to gender and sexual roles. In fact, gender is nothing but a formation of “discursive constructions” (Barker 2002:31). Butler puts this idea even more bluntly by stating that gender functioning is never a singular or premeditated act, but is a result of repetitive illustration of society’s norms and treaties (Butler 1993:xii). She states that: “(T)here is no subject who decides on its gender....gender is part of what decides the subject” (Butler 1993:ix).

Because of the dynamic between cultural historiography and gender, the work of Michel Foucault becomes important, and his three- volume *History of Sexuality* will be used to inform the methodology of this study. Foucault took issue with two of the most important and unquestioned concerns of our modern age, namely that the notion that truth could be identified in a disinterested way and knowledge was something that was independent of power (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2000:24; see Foucault 1990:12, 67–70). Foucault is of the opinion that knowledge and truth have a history, closely related to the way in which operations and relations of power have been transformed over the years. This has especially been happening since the seventeenth century. He demonstrates how the nineteenth century, which is normally thought of as very puritanical and silent with regards to sex, was in fact

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<sup>2</sup> Queer theory is also a dynamic theory used to engage ancient texts. It entails an on-going process of development and as such is unpredictable. According to Butler (1994:1–26) queer theory refuses academic as well as sexual normalization but objects to proper determined objects. This pertains to both sexual matters and methodology in equal measure. However, no matter how queer theory has been applied to the field of biblical studies it always remain uncertain in spite of the fact that relatively few attempts have been made to apply this kind of study (Hornsby & Stone 2011:ix). This form of study may lead to discomfort amongst scholars because of the fact that it renders attention not only to different genders, styles, sexualities, forms of critical approach but also towards form (Stone 2001:11–34). For reasons of methodological delimitation, this study will be less reliant on queer theory.

characterised by institutions and disciplines producing vast amounts of knowledge about sex. This supposedly gave access to the truth about people. Categories of people were created and these categories and their symptoms became established as conditions which distinguished normal and healthy people from deviants and pervers. This knowledge was transferred to the sciences, especially the medical science to produce classifications of human sex and sexuality. This truth and knowledge were tied to power because it was used to regulate people and normalise individuals. The ruling regime drafted policies and laws that determined legally who as normal and healthy and who was perverted and dangerous (Foucault 1990:67–70).

In other words, knowledge (including sexual knowledge) authorised and legitimates the exercising of power (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2000:26). Moreover, Foucault emphasises control over the self, especially control over bodies exercised by authorities. He was a sharp critic of teleological interpretations of history in terms of progress, evolution and the rise of freedom and individualism. He also regarded systems of classification, “epistemes” or “regimes of truth” as he called them, as expressions of a given culture and at the same time forces shaping that culture. He studied the control of thoughts including the way that certain ideas are excluded from an intellectual system. His work is concerned with the exclusion of certain groups (like mad people or sexual deviants) from the social and intellectual others. They are perceived as threatening, even though their existence maintains the “normal” system. This conceptual framework, especially the relation between sex, sexualities, and power, lies at the heart of the current study. Let us look at some examples of such interactions between sexuality and power. While looking at these examples, some important presuppositions with regards to ancient Roman sexuality will also be noted. Foucault’s frameworks are, after all, best described by means of concrete examples, as he also exhibited in his works.

But another caution is appropriate in this regard: it should be remembered that the ancient Roman world was multicultural, and therefore had many different views related to sexual morality. The period 70 BCE to 200 CE is of great importance because this was the period when Roman rule changed from a Republican to a quasi-hereditary imperial principle. The rule of the megalopolis spread from Rome to

include the Mediterranean basin, Western Europe, the Balkans, and part of the Middle East. The population converted into one that was multilingual and multi-ethnic, and culturally divided. Evidence of hostility towards other ethnic groups, especially the Greeks and other Mediterranean people, increased in Latin literature. The upper class became more aware of their social status, life and political vocations (Hallett & Skinner 1997:4). Thus, although we differentiate, for instance, between Greeks, Romans, Jews and, later, Christians, these cultural distinctions were not as clear cut as one may assume. In the sections that follow, some basic presuppositions with regards to the Roman family, marriage, and sexuality (and the active/passive grid) will be delineated as a type of prolegomena to the following chapters.

### *1.3.1 The Family in the Roman World*

The most important cultural context of the family-what Foucault would label a “system of classification” - in the Mediterranean world of antiquity was that of honour and shame. Should a prospective bride not be a virgin by the time she got married she would not only bring shame on herself but also on her whole family. Should a young aristocratic male lose his “manhood” or masculine honour due to violation by another man, the whole family would be dishonoured, as will become clear in this study (Moxnes 1997:20). This system was based on assumptions concerning human character. The ancient system differed markedly from a modern Western society where there is more distinction placed on uniqueness and self-government. In antiquity, the individual was dependent on the group to attain honour but the honour of the group depended on the conduct of any associate of the group (Moxnes 1997:19). Any interface between individuals and between groups was characterised by a rivalry for acknowledgment. These principles adhered to by ancient groups applied especially to the family (Malina 2001:27–57). Sexual honour and sexual shame, the main aspects this study is concerned with, therefore function in a much broader scheme of honour and shame.

Within the social context of the family, the main focus was on relations between men and women with regards to sexuality and procreation. There existed a dualistic cultural value system. This system operated around the binary contraries of honour

and shame, purity and defilement, male and female. Delaney (1987:35–48) is of the opinion that the gods of the monotheistic religions were all men and played an important role in creation and procreation. Therefore, men were associated with creation and procreation in which women had no part (except to be passive) and this power was not shared with women (as opposed to more ancient non-Roman religious systems in which the main gods were female, the remnants of which can be seen in cults like that of the Magna Mater). In this patriarchal religious framework, women were inferior and thus subject to shame. Ancient theologies closely reflected cultural (and contra-cultural) values.

Seeds of Roman patriarchal thought can be found already in pre-Roman times. Jones (2014:103–107) shows that Aristotle, like many others, claimed that in comparison to men, women were moister than men, leading them to menstruate in order for them to get rid of the extra dampness (this argument is found in Aristotle's *On the Generation of Animals* 727–729; in Peck 1942:94–106). This excess of blood could lead to psychological instability and even suicidal ideation. This proved that women were deficient by nature. Aristotle also argued that women did not contribute at all in the conception of a child. For Aristotle only the perfect body existed, that of the male, the female body was the inferior form of the male. The female body, according to him, was too cold to heat up the blood sufficiently to produce sperm like the male body. To Aristotle, the female body always remained the inferior colder body and that of the male the perfect warm body (King 1998:10–11). Galen, more than five centuries later, follows this tradition which last into modernity (Jones 2014:103–107).

Freeborn women possessed virtues appropriate to women, but they were incapacitated by their gender, implying that women needed special protection and surveillance and be trained in especially the virtue of *sōphrosynē*. For instance Musonius Rufus (*Fragments* 3.15; in Knust 2006:37) states that it is necessary that a woman be chaste and self-controlled. Moderation was related to chastity, which meant absolute sexual fidelity to one's husband, (although different standards applied to husbands). Musonius also said that: "she must be pure in respect to unlawful intercourse, pure in other improper pleasures, not be a slave to the

passions, or fond of strife, or extravagant, excessive in adornment” (*Fragments* 3.15 in Knust 2006:37-38). We will elaborate more on modesty and self-control below.

A word for “family” existed neither in Greek nor in Latin and there is no collective word for the husband and wife with one or more children. In Greek, Aristotle (in Roy 1999:1–18) uses the word *oikos* to define the whole household-head of the family, wife, children, members of the household and slaves and other blood relatives. Aristotle sees the household in classical Athens as the basic social unit of the city or *polis*. He calls the household the *oikos* or sometimes *oikia*.

In Latin the word *familia* refers to things and possessions but could also be used to refer to people - in this sense it means anything under the *paterfamilias*, including the wife, children, slaves and relatives (related through male blood from the same house). Often it referred to slaves (Saller 1999:182–97). The *domus* was larger because it also included descendants of the women. Keeping the above in mind is important to define what social structure is meant by the word “family” in Roman antiquity (Moxnes 1997:21). Central to the family was marriage.

### 1.3.2 Sex, Marriage, Virginity and Self-Control: The Rise of Christianity

In Roman antiquity marriage took place within the context of the kinship group. In this way two households or kinship groups were united. It was the bringing together of two gender identities of two households with the purpose of procreating children and often forming new households. It was the formation of a group which had to procreate, produce, share, lend public protection and transmit wealth through inheritance (Moxnes 1997:30). It was however, important to choose the right bride because it meant much regarding social standing and power. Jews married within kinship groups (endogamy) whilst Roman and Greeks practiced exogamy-or marriage outside the kinship group (Malina 2001:134–160).

A Roman woman of good standing (*filia*) had almost no say in the husband her father chose for her. Even after getting married a woman was subject to the will of her father and her father even had the right to dissolve her marriage even if she and her husband would be happily married (Moxnes 1997:103–5). The appropriate age for a

woman to get married was in her teens and that of a man round about thirty years of age. The woman should ideally be a virgin in order for her husband to be able to teach her virtuous behaviour (Laurence & Strömberg 2012:53).

In the pre-Christian Roman world there were, essentially, only two kinds of women: those who were innocent and remained virgins until marriage and thereafter remained true to their husbands and those who were impious (with the exception of religious virgins like the vestals). The chaste way in which a woman behaved irrefutably determined her social standing, and the social standing of the true *materfamilias* was not simply controlled by her marital status, but by her good values. Successive marriage was general and unproblematic although the incidence of widowhood was high as a result of high male mortality rates (Harper 2013:38–42).

There was no natural word for male virginity in Greek or Latin (unlike in Syriac, where there are words for both, namely *btula* (male) and *btultha* (female) (De Wet 2017:175)). The Greek word *sōphrosynē* had different meanings for men than for women. For women it meant chastity, the unbending criterion of corporal integrity before marriage and fidelity during marriage. For men it meant self-control, the mind's orderly management of the body's physical appetites (De Wet 2015:235–236). Men could exercise their moderation on a far wider field than women. The sacred ethics of the ancient Greeks were: nothing in excess. Moderation was for men what chastity was for women. Moderation, however, was hard to achieve in a city where sex was available everywhere and where erotic situations such as baths and gymnastics were in abundance. To practice restraint was mostly there for men, for decent women, the *matresfamilias*, were not expected to have sexual desires other than the marriage bed (Harper 2013:53). With the rise of Christianity, however, another class of females became dominant—the virgins. These were virgins who made a choice (or a choice was made by a male on their behalf, in some cases) to remain unmarried and childless throughout their lives as “brides of Christ” (Elm 1994:25–31).

The opposite of the respectable *materfamilias* or the Christian virgin was the prostitute. Prostitution was legal and even taxed by the state, and broadly supervised by the public officials who had to keep the urban peace. It was a booming industry

under Roman rule (McGinn 2004:1–17). In the densely urbanised economy of the Roman Empire sex was a most basic and readily available commodity. There was a close association between the slave trade and the sex trade (Harper 2013:48). To the wealthy, prostitution was squalid and they had slaves to serve their needs. “Prostitution was the poor man’s piece of the slave system,” Harper (2013:49) rightly notes. Prostitution was a condition of life, and not a result of a woman’s internal constitution.

It has to be taken into account that many players such as the government, some elite men, and slave owners were very active in and trying to make as much money as possible from prostitution (McGinn 2007:4,9). Prostitution was not kept hidden but was clearly visible and available in the cities. It was categorised by the following three aspects: promiscuity, payment, and emotional indifference of the partners towards one another (McGinn 2007:7).

For the Romans and Greeks any hard restrictions on male sexual exertion in the years after puberty were considered implausible. The stretch of life before marriage—usually in the late twenties—was left unregulated. They only had to pass through this period without doing something that could taint their reputation. This led to a high degree of tolerance toward sex with slaves and prostitutes (De Wet 2015:220–226). The only thing that was prohibited was adultery involving the wife of a freeborn male or being passive in a sexual encounter. Adultery was a serious political *culpa* (Harper 2013:56).

But what is noteworthy is that some ancient Roman authors do note that manliness entailed self-control. Excessive pleasure, especially of the sexual kind, was feminine and shameful (Harper 2013:57). Pleasure threatened to undo men, to break down their manly hardness and induce a cascade of feminizing habits. For some men, the balance between the many sexual freedoms and the requirements of manly self-control and moderation was a difficult one to strike.

During the High Roman Empire medical theory led to an affirmation of the importance of moderation - the famous physician Galen believed that excessive indulgence in sexual acts was not only morally reprehensible, but physically

dangerous (Mattern 2008:247). Nature necessitated that humankind should feel desire, but desire could be moderated by one's diet, regimen and the environment. Hot and flatulent foods fuelled desire and led to the build-up of semen, and external stimulants also led to an excess of heat. Habits should not be changed too rapidly because it disrupted the body's established rhythms (Harper 2013:158).

Philo was one of the forerunners in creating a sexual code that became the norm for the early Christian community. As early as the middle of the first century, when missionaries went out of Israel, fornication, or *porneia* in Greek, "...was ready to serve as a shorthand for the culture of sexual indulgence that followers of the new cult were asked to leave behind" (Harper 2013:89). In the early Christian texts *porneia* often referred to incest, exogamy and was even related to idolatry. This becomes evident as early as in the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15, the code of conduct laid down by the Council of Jerusalem which was aimed at regulating the sexual morality of gentile Christians (Loader 2012:142; Harper 2013:89).

For both Philo and Paul chastity, that is, fulfilling the obligations of proper sexual conduct, was a requirement of belonging to the society (Harper 2013:90). Paul believed that fornication polluted the individual and social Christian body, which was supposed to be a temple of the Holy Spirit, the place where the human subject came into contact with the divine. Harper (2013:91) rightly notes: "Christian *porneia* would recast the harmless sexual novitiate that was an unobjectionable part of sexual life of antiquity as an unambiguous sin, a transgression against the will of God". It was the early Judaic and Christian formulations of what *porneia* was that would forever shape Christian sexual morality, and especially views on same-sex passion (Rousselle 1996:78–106).

For Paul, though, *porneia* symbolised an even greater universal problem. The very beginning of Paul's letter to the Romans, in chapter 1, is proof of the fact that for Paul the sexual disorder of Roman society, the rampant fornication so visible in society, signified humanity's withdrawal and estrangement from God. Here, *porneia* becomes a problem of idolatry, and same-sex passion stood out as *the* mark of humanity's alienation from God. But if fornication marked a departure from God's purpose, then in early Christian thought, celibacy and virginity, with the married life

coming a far second, were regarded as a move back to the state akin to that of pre-lapsarian paradise (Martin 2006:51–76). We will elaborate more on Paul's thought in the next chapter.

Thus, to assume that men of ancient times, non-Christian and Christian, were largely indifferent to sexual relations between members of the same sex is not entirely accurate. One simply needs to note the similarities between the first Christian ethical doctrines and the moral philosophy of Graeco-Roman antiquity. Even one of the earliest Christian works that dwells upon the sexual morality in the marital relationship, Clement of Alexandria's *Pedagogus* 10.2 (in Foucault 1992:15), draws upon a set of principles and precepts borrowed directly from Graeco-Roman moral philosophy (Foucault 1992:15). Already a conceptual relationship between sexual activity and evil can be noted, along with a prerequisite for procreative monogamy, with a condemnation of relations between persons of the same sex. And both in Graeco-Roman and Christian moral philosophy, self-control are valorised. But Foucault's (1992:21) warning should be heeded in this regard:

This does not mean however, that there was continuity between paganism and Christianity's take on sexual moralism. The Church and the pastoral ministry stressed the principle of a morality whose precepts were compulsory and whose scope was universal (which did not rule out differences of prescription relating to the status of individuals, or the existence of ascetic movements having their own aspirations). In Classical thought, on the other hand, the demands of austerity were not organized into a unified, coherent, authoritarian moral system that was imposed on everyone in the same manner.... [T]hey appeared in "scattered centres" whose origins were in different philosophical or religious movements.

With the rise of Christianity we therefore observe an intense problematisation of sexual practice. These everyday experiences of sexual behaviour gave rise, as Foucault (1992:24) notes, "...to a way of thinking that sought to rarefy sexual behaviour, to moderate and condition it and to define an austere style in the practice of pleasures". Thus, sexual behaviour starts to function as a major domain of moral experience, both in the Greek and Roman contexts, and early Christianity. Rules for

sexual conduct become matters of the public concern of the group, which now aims to discipline and educate its members. Sometimes these rules are plainly set forth in a coherent doctrine and in explicit teaching. Sometimes “they are transmitted in a diffuse manner so that they form a complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another, thus providing for compromises and loopholes” (Foucault 1992:25). The way one reacted to these moral codes often meant an intense control of desire.

What did Christian sexual moral codes entail? Foucault states that Christianity associated the sexual act itself with evil, sin, the fall and death, although in non-Christian antiquity the sexual act was invested with positive symbolic values (Foucault 1992:11–14). Christianity drew the line at monogamous marriage and laid down the principle of exclusively procreative ends within the conjugal relationship. Christianity strictly excluded relationships between people of the same sex whilst it was mostly accepted in Greek and Roman societies (at least between men, and according to the precepts of the teratogenic grid, as we will see in the next section). Christianity in the period of the early church (that is, the first five centuries) upheld high moral values such as strict abstinence, lifelong chastity and virginity (Foucault 1992:14–15; see also, for example, the letters of Paul to the Corinthians where he proclaims that one should marry only to keep desire under control (1 Cor. 7:9); or the works of Chrysostom *On Virginity* and *Against Remarriage* (Shore 1983)).

What is more, the responsibility of one’s sexual morality and sexual choices was shifted solely onto the individual subject. The Christians of the second and third centuries emphasised the notion of free will against the threat of gnostic determinism and a popular culture addicted to astrology and in opposition to (but also in conjunction with) various Greek and Roman philosophical schools. Ptolemy, for instance, was an important scientist who used astrology to explain the sexual appetites of a person (see Harper 2013:31–35). A person’s sexuality all depended on the place that the sun, moon, Venus or Mars took in the sky when one was born. Such astrological precursors, along with physiognomy, played a very important role in determining whether one would be, for example a *kinaidos* (a term usually referring to an effeminate and passive male). But now, with the endowment of free will the individual became a moral agent with unqualified capability and responsibility

focusing on the realm of moral behaviour (Harper 2013:82). This emphasis had a profound effect on the fashioning of Christian sexual morality, and the principles of self-control and modesty became the defining features of Christian sexual ethics during the first five centuries. Let us now look more closely at how desire and the naturalness/unnaturalness thereof was conceptualised in Roman antiquity.

### *1.3.3 Activity and Passivity and the Problems of Pederasty and Stuprum*

To understand the “unnaturalness” of desire, a concept common to both Paul and Chrysostom, a study of ancient Roman sexuality needs to be undertaken. The ancient Romans did not, like the moderns, have a two-sex (or binary) model where gender is concerned. In fact their view of gender and gender performance was set on a linear scale with absolute manliness at the one end and absolute womanliness at the other. To live in the ancient world meant to be somewhere on this line and having one’s position on the line differ all the time owing to one’s behaviour. This one-sex model is held up by Laqueur in his book *Making Sex* (1990). He argues that humans were divided into two groups during the Enlightenment period based on natural (biological) sex. In ancient times the male body was perceived as perfect and females were seen to be derivative thereof—they were in essence inferior males (Van der Stichele & Penner 2009:61). Laqueur’s work has been the subject of some critique of late (see for instance King 2013), although his notion of gender as a scale rather than two poles remains convincing.

How are one’s behaviour and, subsequently, one’s position on the scale determined? Parker, in his essay entitled, “The Teratogenic Grid” (1997:47–65) and Walters in his essay, “Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought” (1997:29–45) (both featuring in the edited volume *Roman Sexualities* (1997)) stressed the importance of activity and passivity, in relation to normalcy and abnormality (hence the “teratogenic” grid - teratogenic in this case referring to the generation of socio-sexual abnormality) as hallmarks of Roman sexuality, and fundamentals to understanding ancient Roman views on same-sex passion. This grid correlates closely then to one’s gendered performances in Laqueur’s one-sex model of sexual difference/similarity.

This grid implies that the ideal male is active and the ideal female passive - thus, one's sexual "class" in the grid is determined by penetrating or being penetrated. The active male (*vir*) and the passive female (*femina/puella*) are counterbalanced by their deficient opposites, the passive male (*cinaedus/pathicus*) and the active female (*virago/tribas/moecha*). This grid is in nature highly phallogentric (in other words, it favours the dominance, especially sexual dominance, of freeborn Roman men of the ruling classes). In this system "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" (in their modern senses) do not enter into the picture. The *vir* may penetrate both females and passive males and still be seen as "natural". As the ultimate penetrator a Roman *vir* could penetrate any orifice of the passive recipient (mouth, anus, and vagina) but was not allowed to perform any sexual act that might indicate passivity (such as cunnilingus or fellatio). Penetration became the normative and normalising feature of this grid. This meant that what was seen as "natural" was seen as "real". Men were to be "impenetrable penetrators" (Van der Stichile & Penner 2009:61). This focus on activity/passivity means that our modern categories such as "homosexuality", "heterosexuality" and "bisexuality", and so on, are not always useful terms for historical investigation and reconstruction as they transfer too many modern assumptions onto the ancient evidence. The terms should therefore be used with caution, as noted above.

Now in contemporary sexual ideology there is also the perception that children develop a core intrinsic sexual gender identity as soon as their earliest recognition of the biological differences between the two sexes occur (Gleason 1995:59). The perception is that once stabilised in early adulthood, their identity remains constant throughout life. While this is not the avenue to critique modern sexual ideologies about sexual difference, we can say that in ancient times those identities seem to have been more dubious, more so in the case of men. Foucault (1985:38–52; 1986:4–36) has successfully shown that Graeco-Roman sexual relations are organised as patterns of dominant/submissive behaviours that replicate and confirm social superiority and inferiority.

The "true" masculinity and sexual bearing of the dominant agent as penetrator can only be accomplished at maturity; this takes place after the adult male has surpassed the stages of erotic passivity and objectification which were activated at

the commencement of puberty (Hallett & Skinner 1997:134–135). Gender was therefore not so much considered to be a given, but was rather something that had to be continually acquired and proven throughout one's life. This process began before birth and never ended. As an example, the way in which one moved one's eyes, head, hands and hips were all translated as symbols of masculinity or femininity. This is why it was significant to always maintain and regulate bodily postures in the process of development (Gleason 1994:70). Both men and women could exhibit masculine and feminine characteristics and a balance between the two governed where one ended up on the male-to-female scale, making self-control of paramount importance as one's identity was scrutinised and could always be questioned on the basis of one's appearance and behaviour (Van der Stichile & Penner 2009:67). Children were taught how to assume correct bodily postures and gaits from a very young age (as young as toddlers) and this was continued during schooling. An orator could only be a good orator if he had complete control also of his bodily stances (Van der Stichele & Penner 2009:69). This focus on behaviour and appearance implied that physiognomy-when one's physical characteristics and behaviours determined how one's character was seen-played an imperative role in the ancient world, as Gleason (1995:55–81) has demonstrated.

But physiognomy was often exhibited in complex social exchanges. In the ancient Greek context, Socrates' first speech in *Phaedrus*, for instance, alludes to physiognomic traits when he speaks of his disapproval of the love that is given to young and soft boys, too delicate to be exposed to the sun and all made up with rouge and bedecked with fashion accessories. Foucault (1992:15–20) also refers to the *Thesmophoriazousae*, which speaks of pale complexions, smooth shaven cheeks, voices imitating that of women. This does not however, mean that love for boys was frowned upon by the ancient Greeks and Romans, it is merely meant to show that in some circles there was strong disdain for males acting in unmasculine ways, while in others there may have been more accepting opinions.

Thus, the difference between the penetrator and the subordinate to the penetrator often finds sexual expression in the physiognomic distinctions between the penetrator and the penetrated. Socially, too, the penetrator had a much higher hierarchical position than the penetrated and it was the prerogative of adult free

males to be exclusively penetrators-hence the phallocentrism of Roman sexual morality. Women, (certain) boys and slaves - both male and female - were seen as being penetrable. What was mostly seen as “unnatural” was the willingness of a free adult male to be penetrated, since this meant subjection to someone else.

There is even evidence of male-male marriage in the Imperial period (Harper 2013:84). The second-century CE astronomer Ptolemy makes mention of women who had wives, although evidence is scarce about women who would willingly submit to women (Harper 2013:35; see especially the work of Brooten 1996 on female homoeroticism). Amid a highly urbanised and remarkably interconnected empire a peaceful and prosperous society existed where marriage was valorised as an institution of the greatest moral and emotional fulfilment. In some cases, but not without criticism, same-sex pairs openly claimed, and ritually enacted their own conjugal rights. Same-sex *eros* was not beginning to dwindle by the second century. The Greeks and Romans of the high empire conceived of sexual desire as an appetite that was basically indiscriminate in its choice of object. The Roman male remained impenetrable, and this was applicable even for the adolescent. Moreover, slaves remained objects of sexual use and abuse (Harper 2013:35). Yet, it would be a mistake to say that the Romans had anything resembling tolerance of “homosexuality” - sexual behaviour, between persons of the same-sex or not, remained governed by the precepts of the teratogenic grid. The codes for manliness that governed the access to pleasures in the classical world were severe and unforgiving and deviance from it was socially mortal. Passivity in men who were supposed to be active was startlingly frowned upon (Harper 2013:34–36); and males, like slaves, who could be in passive positions according to the grid were not considered real “men”.

But Roman sexuality should be treated differently from that of the Hellenistic world. This is because sex and gender protocols worked differently as is clear from cultural historical studies of these cultures. This, at least, is the view of Hallett and Skinner (1997:8). Gender margins were perhaps more unsolidified for Romans than for Greeks and more predisposed to disruption (Hallett & Skinner 1997:11). Although both cultures condemned pederasty, it was a criminal offence or *stuprum* in Rome. Relations with boys were seen purely as a means of sexual gratification and were

restricted to slave concubines. The Roman cult of virility was probably to blame (Veyne 1985:31). As noted above, a prospective soldier or statesman was not allowed to have fallen victim to the desires of another man. This might also have been due to the very stringent demands on Roman masculinity. There existed, then, very strenuous demands on men, involving their sexual attractions towards one another in order for them not to endanger their political, psychological and social standing. Roman society, in contrast to that of classical Greece, was more exhibitionist in some areas and more suppressive in other domains. According to Lilja (1983:135) Roman sexuality was characterised by a strong tone of fierceness and aggressiveness. The Romans loved the vicious spectacle (Hallett & Skinner 1997:11). They were obsessed with the volatile extremes of “beauty and violation, power and powerlessness, control and abandon” (Hallett & Skinner 1997:12).

It is important to remember that apart from the role the Roman male played as *vir* and *paterfamilias*, being able to defend the parameters of the body from invasive assault as the benchmark of masculinity, was limited. It was only available to a limited few and youths, members of the working class, disreputable persons and slaves were excluded. This implies that social status protected gender status (Hallett & Skinner 1997:14).

Hallett and Skinner (1997:15) are of the opinion that Parker’s teratogenic grid, as discussed above, is reductionist in principle and that it opposes Foucault’s opinion that sexual acts were not categorised in antiquity as “licit” or “illicit”. They are of the opinion that the system implies that “Roman sexual ideology superimposes caste markers upon putatively value-free denominations for biological human males” (Hallett & Skinner 1997:15).

In Roman thought sexual pleasure is primarily ascribed to the penetrator. He is the one who has the phallus (particularly in the male same-sex context). The penetrating individual, naturally being the more powerful individual, dominates the other who is almost powerless. In the Roman context a male being anally penetrated by another male is referred to as *muliebria pati* (having a woman’s experience) and a woman being anally penetrated by a man is referred to as a *puer* (boy) (Ormand 2009:135–136). In both cases, thus, the penetrated party is being referred to as something

other than a “man” (Kuefler 2001:19). Therefore, the only sexually accepted and culturally tolerated same-sex relationship for the Romans was that between an adult freeborn male citizen and a sexually passive male, who had to be younger in age, a slave or ex-slave or a noncitizen (Hallett & Skinner 1997:31).

In Roman society male slaves, even if they have reached adulthood, were not seen as adults but referred to as *homines* (low-class men or infamous men). *Vir* referred only to freeborn adult Roman male citizens in good standing—usually those on the top of the Roman hierarchy (Cantarella 2002:99). This is an indication that gender was also cultivated by social standing and not only by biological sex.

To take the role (especially psychological) of slaves in Roman society into account is of great importance due to the slaves’ presence in same-sex relationships. Slaves could become citizens, although only second-rate citizens, but a citizen could also become a slave and thus by implication penetrable. Slaves could be beaten, tortured and both male and female slaves were at the clemency of their masters for sexual use (Glancy 2002:50–54). This was so unexceptional in Roman society that it was barely observed in Roman sources. This is why having one’s body penetrated was considered to be slave-like (the archetypical passive body) (Hallett & Skinner 1997:39–40).

Moreover, pederasty – which is something different from same-sex passion between two adults (Masterson 2014:17–19) - in Roman society, unlike that of Greek society, where it was seen as pedagogical, was never wholly unproblematic. In Roman sexuality, as mentioned above, penetration determined masculinity and to be a free male and to be penetrated, even temporarily so, whilst being an adolescent, entailed a huge threat to one’s masculinity. The age at which one was supposed to switch from being penetrable to penetrator was always very vaguely defined in Roman society (Kuefler 2001:91). The Romans coped with this problem by identifying pederasty as a Greek phenomenon being introduced into Roman society (Gentry 2009:20). The Romans, unlike the Greeks, did not approve of freeborn male adolescents being penetrated but had no problem whatsoever if the penetrated was a slave boy. During the late Republic a law, the *Lex Scantinia*, was even introduced to try and restrain the penetration of freeborn male boys (Milligan 2015:7–15). In this

way, assurance was gained that future leaders of Rome were not stained by the stigma of having been sexually passive.

Another problem the Romans had with the practice of pederasty was that some of the adolescents continued with their passive behaviour into adulthood. There was no clear line that separated adulthood from adolescence and these men kept wearing make-up to look younger and play the pleasing (feminine) role and this had to be prevented at all cost. Rome could not afford an adult manhood of “passive” males to lead the city, as was often said, for instance, of the emperors Elagabalus or Commodus—this would signify tragedy (Cantarella 2002:140–154).

Related to prostitution and pederasty, we see that the ancient Latin term for any kind of sexual misconduct was *stuprum*. Ausonius (*Epigrams* 91; in Kuefler 2001:92) started using the term in the sense of both the active penetrator and the passive penetrated. One legal definition started to include both illegal penetration of males and females (married women, virgins and widows) (Cantarella 2002:143–144). Thus, by introducing laws, men who were free to penetrate, thus proving their manliness, were restrained by unmanly restrictions of their sexual freedom by the broadening of the field of sexual misdemeanour. The jurist Paulus (*Sentences* 5.4.14; in Kuefler 2001:90–94) sums it up well:

Anyone who debauches a boy under the age of seventeen, or commits any other outrage on him, whether he is abducted by him or by a corrupt companion; or who solicits a woman or a girl, or does anything for the purpose of corrupting their chastity, or offers his house for that purpose, or gives them any reward in order to persuade them, and the crime is consummated, shall be punished with death; if it is not consummated, he shall be deported to an island, and his profligate accomplices shall suffer the extreme penalty.

*Stuprum*, however, was different from adultery. In Roman society a law, known as the *Lex Iulia*, existed. This law proclaimed that any woman guilty of adultery would publicly be known as a prostitute. Such a woman was then supposed to wear a toga in public. Only prostitutes were accustomed to wear togas in public (McGinn

1998:156). During the classical period, women were also prosecuted for adultery, whether they were caught in the act, or were only being suspected of it. Women found guilty in courts of adultery were harshly punished, especially when the wills of their lovers were contested (McGinn 1998:117–118). Strict rules were also inflicted on women found guilty of adultery, should they want to get married or remarry. These laws were not just created for any reason. They were put in place in order to safeguard the procreation of true Roman citizens. Adultery committed by a woman was a terrible shame not only to herself, but also to her family and city.

But a man who had intercourse with a woman who was either divorced or widowed and still carried the rank of her ex-husband, was guilty of *stuprum*. It was only obvious that all married women were out of bounds to any man. Much less attention was given in courts to men who were found guilty of adultery than to women. Men were allowed to have intercourse with girl slaves, boy-/male slaves, courtesans, and prostitutes whilst being married, but the same rule did not apply to women (the conditions of adultery were therefore different for men than for women). Women were only allowed to have intercourse with their own husbands (Knust 2006:44). Chrysostom's response to the teratogenic grid and his views on *stuprum* and adultery will be discussed in a later chapter.

In conclusion, the male citizen's role as the "masculine" one is therefore determined by his role as dominator, namely that of his external circumstances, his wife, children, slaves, and mostly himself. Any form of lack of self-control over carnal desire was seen as a sign of weakness. Immoderation in any kind of sexual behaviour was a sign of being less than a man and seen as "womanliness" which would lead to a lowering of social standing and masculinity. This led to a reversion to a "passive" womanish condition (Foucault 1985:82–86). This risk made manhood in ancient times always conditional and essentially at risk (Hallett & Skinner 1997:135). Roman society attempted to prevent the problem of Roman boys becoming objects of sexual pleasure, unlike the Greeks, by forbidding relationships with boys, from the literary *puer delicatus*, "boy-favourite", the role of which was usually put on by a slave or ex-slave often of outlandish origin (in Roman society) (Hallett & Skinner 1997:135).

It is important always to remember that in antiquity the masculine was central, perfect, and complete and the feminine marginal, imperfect, and incomplete. Women made up part of the group that did not fall on the perfect manly level of sexuality which consisted of a continuous line with the perfect male on the one end and the incomplete imperfect male or female (penetrated/penetrable subject) on the other end. The latter were part of the group of slaves, minority ethnic groups, and foreigners or men who performed “unmanly” deeds - those prone to penetration. Males had *virtus* or moral excellence which females lacked, and this was very important in understanding Roman manhood (Kuefler 2001:19–20). To quote Butler (1990:48): “The feminine is ‘always’ the outside and the outside is ‘always’ the feminine”. What is of great interest though, is that Hopkins writes: “[M]asculinity exposes its own uncertainties in its incessant self-monitoring, a self-monitoring accomplished by monitoring others” (Hopkins in Lanham 1992:123). The marginalisation of the feminine thus results in an intensification of control, domination, and surveillance.

These presuppositions related to sexual morality in Greek, Roman, Jewish and Christian antiquity will be fundamental for the discussions that will follow in this study. The continuities and discontinuities noted, as well as the complexities of some of the issues, especially related to terminology, serve as guidelines in the sections to come.

#### 1.4 OVERVIEW

This introductory chapter served to highlight the problem statement, *status quaestionis*, methodology, and some basic presuppositions about Roman sexuality that will be foundational to this study. The dissertation consists of another three chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a short biography of Paul in order to understand which factors might have had an influence on his thought on sexuality. The main elements of Paul’s sexual morality will then be discussed by mainly referring to 1 Corinthians and Romans. It is prudent to gain a firm understanding of Pauline sexual morality in itself in order to grasp how Chrysostom appropriated some principles thereof.

Chapter 3 starts by examining some of the sexual norms of the later Roman Empire. Thereafter, a brief biography of Chrysostom's life will also be provided. The main part of the chapter investigates how Chrysostom uses Pauline material in his understanding of marriage, procreation, celibacy, and same-sex passion. This investigation forms the crux of the present study.

Chapter 4 discusses how modern churches use biblical interpretation to inform its teachings on marriage, divorce and same-sex relations. This chapter therefore aims to position moments of biblical interpretation of sexuality, such as Paul and Chrysostom, in a broader and contemporary context. The pathologisation of certain expressions of sexuality, which was already evident in Paul and Chrysostom, is evaluated by means of modern bio-psycho-social research and some suggestions with regards to the appropriation and misappropriation of the writings of both Paul and Chrysostom in modern Christianity are provided.

## CHAPTER 2

### PAUL AND HIS SEXUAL ETHICS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF PAUL'S LIFE, THOUGHT AND IDENTITY

Paul the Apostle was hardly an uncontroversial figure (Schnelle 2003:25). His thoughts started causing difficulties already in New Testament times. His influence in the early church, however, is unprecedented. Early Christian authors found Paul's theology and the events surrounding his life most appropriate for structuring their own present. Goertz (2001:24) is of the opinion that the past is accessible to us solely through the medium of the present, again only in a construed and chosen form. Those aspects of the past world that are applicable to us are no longer merely part of the historical, but become part of our current world, influencing our world-view and interpretation of the present world. Therefore, all interpretation of the past is viewed through the lens of the present (Schnelle 2003:27–28). Thus, historical “objectivity” is a very limited and even problematic notion. One could rather speak of the suitability or the credibility of the past. Past events become known to us through the mediation of interpreters. History is *constructed*, and interpretations are built on other interpretations. As Schnelle (2003:28–29) notes “events are not history but become history”. The construction of history and individual identity therefore go hand-in-hand.

Group-identity formation works slightly different and also has an impact on one's identity construction; however, identity, according to Schnelle (2003:39), is always an endorsed, attributed entity (see also Gale Group 2001:313). External perspectives have positive and negative influences on internal perceptions, thus the self-worth of both the individual and the group is at times destabilised (think of Paul's defensive stance in 1 Corinthians). Just so, theological statements are always intertwined into a social context that preconditions both their backgrounds and their later understanding – the social context of Paul will thus receive ample attention. However, “reality as a whole including religion, is exclusively a matter of human construction: we generate the world in which we live by living in it” (Schnelle

2003:39–42). Inevitably, Paul's new self and his radically redefined theological perspectives shaped his views on sexuality.

Jodamus (2015:12) points out that: "Paul is engaged in the art of persuasion, and his rhetoric is a rhetorical construction which combines 'historical' and sociorhetorical aspects". It should be kept in mind that both the identities of Paul and Chrysostom have been fashioned by the expansive discursive customs of the Graeco-Roman gender models. For this reason a cultural-historical approach is useful and it should be kept in mind where both Paul and Chrysostom "came" from.

These points relating to history and identity are as true for the modern historian as they are true for ancient Christian "historians" - Paul, his life and thought become reconstructed with the purpose of becoming relevant, of making, for those in the present. Our own accounts of Paul's thought and life are equally reconstructed, yet another caution of which this study takes note. Before we get to Chrysostom's reconstruction of Paul and his appropriation of Pauline sexual ethics, this chapter will first provide an overview of Paul's life and thought (especially the influences from his Pharisaic background and foundation in Graeco-Roman philosophy) as is relevant for the topic at hand.

Paul's authentic letters most likely date between ca.51 and 60 CE, and these letters provide a glimpse into his theological contemplation and they also elucidate his personal feelings, his strengths, and weaknesses. Unfortunately the part of his life before his emergence as zealous Pharisee is more difficult to reconstruct. Yet the phase of his life that is so important for understanding his personality - the time up to the composition of 1 Thessalonians, which is probably his earliest letter, can only be studied in fragments (Schnelle 2003:32–33). It is also important to realise that Paul's letters were not meant as biographies but served as part of an inclusive communicative linkage between himself, his co-workers, and particular congregations to resolve congregational problems. In these letters we often have only Paul's position on the problems. Between these letters, and the later accounts in Acts, however, we do have a lot of material for reflection on the apostle (Dunn 1998:1–26).

It is of the utmost importance to remember that each of Paul's letters was embedded in, and affected by his own situation (Kulikovsky 1999:6–7). His theology can only be rightly understood if each letter is seen as a doctrinal theological concept within its historical development and the basic theological affirmations that bore it along (Schnelle 2003:42). Paul's way of thinking was constantly influenced by the opposition he experienced within early Christianity. The conflicting facade became even more evident towards the end of the Pauline ministry. These instances of conflict and opposition must have had a huge impact on the apostle's way of thinking. He was considered by the Jews as an apostle and by the Christian Jews as a counterfeiter. They experienced him as hostile. But still he was able to gain co-workers. Not only the Deutero-Pauline epistles (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2, Timothy, and Titus) but also Acts should be seen as an effort to extend Paul's influence and thought into transformed epochs (Schnelle 2003:44).

According to the Acts-narrative, the turning point in Paul's life was the Damascus-road event. Paul first experienced the resurrected Jesus Christ on the Damascus road and this led to a new interpretation of God, the world, human existence in such a way that it resulted in a radical re-orientation in his life. In order for someone to come to terms with the world, the world must be interpreted and re-interpreted (Schnelle 2003:35). Throughout his ministry Paul connects the pre-existing earthly Jesus with the crucified and risen Christ, which encompasses both the pre-existence of Christ and his return, the *parousia*. Paul projected his own sense of identity in his writings in order to give them meaning and to relate to his audience (Harrill 2012:23–75). Identity develops as a continuous collaboration between the experience of differentiation of the personality (usually from outside groups) and the positive determination and formation of the self (Schnelle 2003:36). Identity is never static but is part of an on-going progression of self-fashioning.

But Paul's identity is a very complex matter to address. Despite being a Jew, he was informed of the Graeco-Roman philosophy of his time. He likely received classical training as a citizen of Tarsus until the age of fifteen, before he went to Jerusalem for further training under Gamaliel (Harrill 2012:28–30; Schnelle 2003:69). Paul was first and foremost a Pharisee. Near the end of the Herodian Period, the Pharisees

changed from a political group to a pietistic group. According to Josephus (in Schwartz 1990:174–175; see also Saldarini 1989:107–133), the Pharisees differentiated themselves from others by their reputation for being matchless with regards to ancestral law. They were more religious than others and maintained the law with greater submission. They were the most learned of Jews and observed ancestral traditions strictly (Schnelle 2003:67). The keeping of ritual purity laws was important not only within the confines of the temple but also in everyday life. In some cases they thus expanded on the meaning of the Torah in order to apply it to the multiplicity of everyday situations. During this early period of his life, we also know that Paul was a passionate persecutor of the church (Phil. 3:5–6).

It was Paul's vocation however, that governed his social status. According to a later account in Acts 18:3, Paul, like Aquila and Priscilla, was an autonomous craftsman or tentmaker. If this description is accurate, then it is possible that they worked with cloth, although it is more likely that they worked with leather. This means that Paul could have been from the lower middle class (Hock 1980:16). The fact, however, that he had received both a Greek and a Jewish education, and the linguistic and intellectual faculties seen in his letters, as well as his Roman citizenship and international activity, indicate that Paul rather belonged to the urban middle class (Schnelle 2003:63).

Paul began with a mission to the Hellenistic cities of the Mediterranean world. The mission to the Hellenistic cities was based almost exclusively on the principle to visit cities with a Roman republican constitution, subordinate to Rome's imperial rule, and to always go to a synagogue first (Borg & Crossan 2009:59–61). The main protagonists of the Hellenistic mission were Barnabas and Paul, although other co-workers are often mentioned (Acts 13–14). Paul was at home in the Roman world and was well acquainted with its culture, philosophy and rhetoric (Yarbrough 1985:31).

Paul travelled from city to city and hardly preached in rural areas. The reason for this might be that Greek was understood in the cities and not necessarily in the rural areas (Meeks 2003:9–22). Another reason might be that for Paul, cities were

representative of the entire world. Paul did not preach only to the Jews but turned his attention to the “God-fearers” (Borg & Crossan 2009:81–92). These were gentile persons who were sympathetic to Judaism but who had not converted or been circumcised. God-fearers demonstrated an independence from their native traditions and religion. They were particularly receptive to the Christian faith, which crossed ethnic and cultural boundaries and offered an independent tradition (Borg & Crossan 2009:91). Earliest Pauline Christianity offered to these people the possibility of acknowledging a monotheistic form of religion, attaining religious egalitarianism without having to go through circumcision and ritual burdens which might have had a negative influence on their social status (Theissen 1982:103–104).

Some of these God-fearers were influential people who provided financial and political security to the synagogue, but being lured away from Judaism led to conflict between Judaism and Christianity (Harrill 2012:35–38). It might be that Paul felt comfortable preaching to the higher members of society owing to the fact that he was of Tarsus making him equal to, for instance, a citizen of Corinth. This, however, does not alter the reality that most of the Christians in a city like Corinth came from the lower social strata (Theissen 1982:104).

At this point, the question of Paul’s knowledge of Graeco-Roman philosophy and culture surfaces - a point that will also be of value when discussing Paul’s sexual ethics in relation to those of the Romans delineated in the previous chapter. Paul’s native language was most likely Greek, although some are of the opinion that it was Aramaic. He grew up in a Hellenistic metropolis and carried out his missionary work primarily in Hellenistic Asia Minor, but also in Macedonia and Achaia (Borg & Crossan 2009:59–65). He had a good knowledge of Hellenistic thought. The extent to which Paul was familiar with Hellenistic poetry and philosophy can never be known precisely. He did however, quote Euripides in 1 Corinthians 15:33 where he stated: “Bad company ruins good morals” (Thiselton 2000:1253–1257).

Paul compared himself to the Hellenistic image of the philosopher who had to maintain vigilance and self-control on a daily basis to remain a free and independent subject. As Schnelle (2003:76) explains, what Seneca (*On the Tranquillity of the Mind* 3.4; in Basore 1932:275), for instance, required of philosophers also applied to

Paul, who was a teacher of ethics, namely to make clear “what is right, what it means to have a sense of duty, what it means to be willing to suffer, to be brave, to have no fear of death, to know God and the priceless value of a good conscience”. It is important to remember that Paul made his appearance amongst other philosophers, magicians and preachers. Instruction on how to live one’s life and modelling a way of life free from material needs, and thus of freedom, was part of what was preached by both Paul and the Cynic philosophers. Epictetus is of the opinion that a man should not be tied down by any earthly obligations to enable him to be completely available to be in the service of his god/philosophy (Epictetus, *Discourse* 3.22.69; in Schnelle 2003:76–77).

Paul’s character of argumentation, the diatribe, has a Hellenistic milieu. It was characterised by dialogical rudiments and rhetorical interrogations, objections raised by the speaker himself, conversations with an invented consort whose objections are rejected and the use of stock phrases (Stowers 1981:1–9). The cynic Teles, the stoics, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus and Seneca were amongst those who used this style of rhetoric (Schnelle 2003:77–78). Romans 1:18–2:11 is an excellent example of diatribe (Stowers 1981:34–46). Paul especially used this style when he could not be sure of the positive tolerance of his theological opinions. It is especially used when Paul had strong theological arguments where on the one hand, for whatever reason, communication had broken down. His use of this kind of rhetoric confirms his high level of Hellenistic tutoring, even though it may not be of the high standard of other Greek literary texts (Schnelle 2003:77–79). Paul’s diatribes often equalled that of the Cynics and Stoics where he described the hardships he had to endure in his missions. It also upheld the same moral values as that of the Stoics and Cynics (Schnelle 2003:79).

For Paul, conscience (*syneidēsis*) is active in all human beings (Rom. 2:12–16; see especially Bosman 2003:240–257). Thus Gentiles have a moral conscience just like Jews. In this regard, Paul’s thought exhibits clear Stoic lines, similar to Philo, as Bosman (2003:106–190) has shown. For instance, in addition to notions of conscience, clear lines can also be drawn between the Pauline and Stoic models of freedom. Seneca specifically associated external slavery with internal freedom and external freedom with slavery (see De Wet 2015:34–41), and for Epictetus (in

Schnelle 2003:79–80), freedom is also identical with inner independence - they who allowed themselves to be subjugated by their own dispositions were slaves (De Wet 2017:9–18). The language of slavery was central in both Paul's and Chrysostom's sexual ethics, as De Wet (2015:220–231) has shown. One could easily become a slave of passion and lust if desire went unchecked.

Stoic philosophy further held forth that freedom was characterised by the idea of the agreement of one's own will with the will of God. This takes place in differentiating oneself from the world, what is one's own, from what is alien. As Schnelle (2003:80) explains, the freedom of the self, meant being integrated in the surrounding wholeness of the cosmos and at the same time detaching oneself from natural emotions. The ultimate in freedom meant not to be a slave of anything, including human sexual desire (Byron 2003:250–253). The Stoic attained freedom when he/she could understand themselves as integrated into the divine order of the universe, where one was able to distinguish between oneself and the universe, although freedom from the world by no means meant being *indifferent* from the world (indifference was a key concept in Stoic thought). Freedom and love fitted together (Schnelle 2003:80). In 1 Corinthians 7:20–22 Paul came close to the Stoic ideal when he declared that social constructions were irrelevant for his understanding of freedom. Freedom was made possible by and having as its goal Jesus Christ alone (Schnelle 2003:80).

Therefore, in Paul, all the central perceptions of his thought have both a Jewish and Graeco-Roman history, these partly coincide, but they should not be considered separate. In the words of Schnelle (2003:83):

Context refers not only to texts but also to the spiritual and intellectual realms in which perceptions and ideas originate and are advocated and variously modified. We can see the different contexts in which texts originate forming a series of concentric circles, from the literary context to the dominant ideas within the culture as a whole. In accordance with this, we do not attain the goal of understanding an author and his or her texts until the whole circle of possible contexts has been examined.

The possibility of a new identity set forth by Paul for both Jews and Gentiles was very attractive. This could be deduced from its very uniquely successful history. But conflicts were unavoidable because Paul's concept of identity was in sharp contrast to many early Christians' views also in its social context, especially that of Judaism and the Jewish Christians, and conflict in Corinth was important for the spiritual growth of both Paul and the congregation (Kok 2012:1). Let us now look more closely at how Paul the Apostle understood Christian sexual ethics, and let us also attempt to determine how Paul navigated the tempestuous waters of Roman sexual morality delineated in the previous chapter.

## 2.2 SEXUALITY IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

As we have noted, Paul was a dedicated Pharisee and was expected to live a "blameless" life under the law. These laws were very strict, especially with regards to maintaining sexual purity. Paul had similar expectations with regards to Christian converts. It is of the utmost importance to understand that Paul's views on sexuality were strongly influenced by his Judaic milieu, his having been a Pharisee and that he shared many of the views of Philo and even Plato, as will become evident.

We witness something of Jewish moral superiority in the *Letter of Aristeas* 134–139 (in Wright 2015:283–285) in which it is stated that compared to other nations who defile themselves by promiscuous intercourse including that with other men, their mothers or even their sisters and even pride themselves on it. The Jews managed to keep themselves separate from these sins (Yarbrough 1985:9). It goes further to state that the Jews managed to keep holy the purity of marriage, withholding themselves from intercourse with boys (Yarbrough 1985:10). Josephus writes in his book *Against Apian* (in Yarbrough 1985:11) that the Jewish view on sex is based on the Laws of Moses and states that the Law requires of men and women only to have sexual contact in order to procreate. The Rabbinic law, however, required of all men to multiply as was stated in Genesis 9:1. Procreation was extremely important, since it signifies the promise of the Abrahamic covenant, and any relationship that negatively impacts the creation of legitimate children, was very negatively evaluated. This is important for understanding the extreme criticisms of the Hebrew Bible

against acts of same-sex passion or adultery (and also why it was acceptable for some of the patriarchs, like Abraham himself, to have children with slave women).

Thus procreation was seen as an obligation demanded of everyone and regarded as a divine command. Some Rabbis however, did feel that marriage could hinder one from studying the Torah (for late antique Rabbinic views, see especially Balberg 2014:234). Others were of the opinion that marriage could be used as an aid in studying the Torah (Yarbrough 1985:21–22). Yarbrough (1985:18) is of the opinion that Paul was very much aware of these laws and rules and they must have had an influence on his opinions and his determining in distinguishing the community of believers and in encouraging them to remain faithful to the new belief, as can be seen in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4 (see also Fonrobert 2000:40–76). The following sections will examine Paul's sexual ethics, first as related to marriage, with a focus on 1 Corinthians 7 (including the issue of *stuprum*), then on same-sex passion. This will help us to better make sense of how Chrysostom would eventually appropriate and transform Paul's sexual ethics in his own works. Paul's discussions in 1 Corinthians 7 were also very influential in Chrysostom's thought (De Wet 2014:187–190)

### *2.2.1 Paul on Marriage, Desire and Adultery: The Case of 1 Corinthians 7*

This section will focus mainly on Paul's thoughts on 1 Corinthians 7 although it will be contextualised with comments made on other chapters of 1 Corinthians. The only detailed and sustained example of the discussion on sexual ethics is found in the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians. This is not because Paul had a special interest in the matter, but because it was an issue for the Corinthians. They were unsure of what the gospel expected of them, and there were those who practiced libertinism on the one end of the moral spectrum. On the other end sexual engagement as well as marriage was completely rejected (Demming 2004:12).

It might have been that these many opinions were created because Paul did not give clear instruction on the matter when he founded the church in Corinth. Some might have thought that being above the law meant the end of moral restraints, while others perceived that Paul was on good terms with the ordinary household, such as

that of Stephanas, and assumed that Christians could continue normal family life. Yet others were aware of Paul's celibate lifestyle and his negative use of the word flesh (*sarx*), and concluded that the gospel commanded a complete separation from sexuality (Countryman 2007:191). Weiss (1925:169) is of the opinion that some of the members of the congregation were fearful because of the apostle's strong condemnation of sexual sins (which was also affirmed at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:28–29). Paul became aware of these issues while he was in Ephesus and he was informally informed about the libertines because the Corinthians wrote him a letter about the ascetics. This might mean that the congregation was less concerned about the libertines than about the ascetics.

### *2.2.1.1 The Context of Corinth*

Paul remained in Corinth for almost a year and a half (according to Acts 18:11) and had sufficient time to discuss the ethics of sex. In a different context, though, he reminds the Thessalonians that adultery is inconsistent with Christian life (1 Thess. 4:1–12). He explained some of the main aspects of the gospel and communicated the tradition of Jesus' life. He imparted traditions such as the Lord's Supper and the resurrection to them. He discussed divorce and cited a tradition of Jesus (1 Cor. 7:10–11). In 1 Corinthians it becomes obvious that Paul did and could not discuss matters that were previously important to the Corinthians, but had to start from the beginning in discussing sexual ethics (Countryman 2007:192). Sexual ethics were intertwined with various other aspects and themes of Paul's moral doctrines.

Now Corinth was rife with Greek philosophical schools and discourse, and many of the Christians of Paul's group were probably influenced by or at least aware of these philosophical traditions, as well as the ethics of sex and marriage that these schools taught. They formed an important background to 1 Corinthians. Marriage was scorned by many pre-Socratic philosophers (Yarbrough 1985:32). Epicurus was of the opinion that as a general rule, when a man got married, it would distract him from the pursuit of pleasure and distract him from obtaining calmness of soul (see Brennan 1996:346–352). Brennan (1996:346) is of the opinion that the scholarly community had misunderstood Epicurus' attitude towards sex. Epicurus, according to him, acknowledged that the desire towards sex was universal, but that no pain

necessarily ensued from its non-satisfaction. Diogenes (*Lives* 10:118–119; in Ward 1996:78) agreed with this statement, who states that desire is natural, but only in order to procreate. The early Cynic-Stoic tradition can, however, be found to be more favourable towards marriage (Yarbrough 1985:34). Antipater advised the young and encouraged men to marry and reproduce (*On Marriage* 254.25–31; in Yarbrough 1985:34). The new principle then held that marriage allowed a man to practice philosophy and fulfil his duty to the *polis*, because it became the only way to reproduce legitimate heirs to the future of the city (Yarbrough 1985:43).

Both Pythagorean and Stoic literature warned men against marrying for wealth or beauty or nobility or getting married to a woman of greater age in order to prevent unhappiness (Yarbrough 1985:49). Paul would make similar claims upon his Christian audience. As Gaca (2003:94) explains: “Pythagorean sexual ethics...has had great influence in its transmuted Christian guise: ‘procreationism,’ the dictate that sexual relations should be practiced strictly in a temperate and deliberately reproductive way, and solely within marriage”.

A typical Cynic point of view was that a wife should share her husband’s philosophical viewpoint (Yarbrough 1985:52). Although the standard point of view was that husbands and wives should share all things in common, the philosophers also held the point of view that both be should sexually faithful. Others, though, held the point of view that the wife should patiently bear her husband’s infidelity (Yarbrough 1985:52–53). For the Neo-Pythagoreans who accepted love and togetherness, subservience of the wife was clearly expected (Gaca 2003: 94–104; Yarbrough 1985:55).

This view went so far as even expecting from the wife to serve only the gods of her husband. Pomeroy (1999:100) explains how Plutarch, in his *Advice to Bride and Groom* (also translated in Pomeroy 1999), maintained that it was better for a subordinate wife to follow a sensible husband than for one who has won over her husband with the vice of desire and thus controls him. He strongly advised submissiveness of the wife in marriage. Interestingly, women were advised by both Plutarch and the Neo-Pythagoreans not to divorce their husbands in cases of infidelity (Gaca 2003:98–99; Yarbrough 1985:58–59).

Along with being influenced (and possibly confused) by the various philosophical groups, the congregation of Corinth during the period in which the first letter to the Corinthians was composed was divided into different groups (or factions), who attached themselves to different apostles that visited Corinth (some, for instance, felt more loyalty towards Apollos than Paul; see 1 Cor. 3:1–8; see also Mihaila 2009:180–212). Another reason for division in the congregation was the split between those who had been baptised by Paul, although these were smaller in number than those who were baptised by other apostles. Those who “belonged” to other apostles, who were supported by factions in the congregation, all strived for superiority amongst the groups, for no one would like to maintain a “second-hand” missionary. In 1 Corinthians 1:26 Paul mentions possible protagonists for these parties in the congregation: they were the “wise”, “powerful” and “those of noble birth”, like Crispus who was a synagogue leader, Gaius who played host to the whole congregation in Corinth and Stephanas who was also an influential member of the community. The people in the Pauline “party” occupied high social positions. It can also be assumed that smaller groups of the congregation met in houses as parties of Peter and Apollos, but would also all come together in the house of Gaius (Theissen 1982:55–56).

In the fragments that make up 2 Corinthians there is almost no sign of a party strife but it seems as if the entire congregation of Corinth was united against Paul. Those who wrote to Paul about his insufficiencies were all well-educated because they could evaluate his letter and they raised certain objections towards Paul’s facade and rhetoric. Paul replied with a collection of philosophical nuances that not everybody could understand. The above evidence points to the fact that the protagonists of partition in the community were members of the upper class who had followers from the lower class. The reason for the conflict seemed to have been that members of the upper class were in competition with one another (Theissen 1982:57–58).

However, in the city of Corinth we get the formation of what has been dubbed the principle of love-patriarchalism (see Theissen 1982:108–109; MacDonald 2004:43–44). According to this principle, equality in status was extended to all human beings,

be they a woman, man or slave. It offered a new pattern for directing and shaping social relations in contrast to Roman tradition. The Romans tried to solve the problem of social integration by means of a vision of citizenry enjoying equality of status. This equality, however, was at the centre of politico-social conflicts. As the problem escalated, citizenship was given to more and more people in order to try and cause peace. Political equality was always demarcated; slaves and resident aliens were excluded. In the love-patriarchalism of small religious groups such as Christians, equality of status was extended to all - women, foreigners and slaves (see, for instance, the possible baptismal formula in Gal. 3:28).

In the political and social realm, class-specific differences were essentially accepted, affirmed and religiously legitimated. The struggle for equal rights was replaced by a struggle to achieve a pattern of relationships among members of various strata. These would be characterised by respect, concern and a sense of responsibility. Christianity held the promise to the socially excluded groups of being a certain part of a humanity that became ever more dependent on the idea of fundamental equality of status (Theissen 1982:108–109). Maybe this principle could have set the Christian philosophical outlook on sexual equality in a different light from that of other philosophical standards of the day and could have had an influence on Paul's view on equality in marriage, setting him apart from other schools of philosophical thought.

#### 2.2.1.2 *Paul's Sexual Discourse Leading Up to 1 Corinthians 7*

In his correspondence to the Corinthians, Paul contrasts gentile non-Christians with possible affiliations to some of the abovementioned philosophical schools with the brothers and sisters in Christ. He accuses the Corinthians of tolerating a kind of fornication that not even the gentiles tolerated - here Paul refers to a man living with his mother-in-law as if they were husband and wife (1 Cor. 5:1; see also Thiselton 2000:384–391). If the case of the man living with his father's wife is taken into account, it is obvious that some members of the congregation did not think much about the situation, although to other members it was cause for great concern in their immense devotion to the gospel.

The Corinthian assembly dismissed the case of the man living with his father's wife as if it were of little significance. For Paul the matter of the son living with his father's wife was not about purity but about the maintenance of the existing family structures. The man was stealing what was the property of his father and thus this practice was not binding to the patriarchal situation of the time. Paul did not argue for the retention of the family structure or its accompanying ethic. He simply assumed it. The dictates of ancient society meant that every ethical issue, particularly sexual transgressions, should be treated as serious (Countryman 2007:194).

Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 5:9–11 that Christians should not have anything to do with idolaters, harlots, drunkards, or the greedy. Again there is no mention of purity rules (these are assumed), although the theme of taking from someone else that which does not belong to you basically comes down to greed (and a transgression of the law of the Decalogue). For Paul most people who practiced sexual promiscuity were thieves, taking from others what is not theirs (Countryman 2007:196). This demonstrates the interrelatedness of vice, both sexual and non-sexual in Paul's thought. Paul reminds the community in Corinth, that before they became Christians, they were like the gentiles who were idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, fornicators, and prostitutes (1 Cor. 12:1–2; see also Knust 2006:75). As the "father" of the Corinthian assembly Paul had the responsibility to preserve and define the sexual purity expected of the church of Corinth. Again Paul associates sexual immorality with greed when he refers to the man living with his father's wife (Knust 2006:77).

In 1 Corinthians 6:12–13 Paul makes it clear that one cannot be in the service of sexual desire and the worship of God at the same time. He believed that the bodies of the Christians made up the body of Christ. One could thus not be part of the body of Christ if one could not practice self-mastery. He goes on to state that anyone who has intercourse with a prostitute defiles the body of Christ since the Christian (human) body has become the temple of the Holy Spirit. The purity of the church therefore becomes reliant upon the sexual purity of the believers (Knust 2006:78–79).

Paul was of the opinion that in order to maintain the purity of the church, the boundaries of the church needed to be strictly guarded. The body of Christ did not become polluted or infected by contact with the cosmos with which it came into contact, but by its boundaries being crossed. In ancient times it was common belief that “illness” was brought on by demonic infestation of the body. Even by breathing bad breath (*miasma*) badness would enter the body and cause disease (Martin 1999:170). Paul thus became a stringent advocate for prescribing strict boundaries between the body of the Christian and the body of the world in order to maintain the boundaries between the Church world and the demonic world (Martin 1995:71). For Paul, the prostitute became not a human being in her/his own right, but something that represented that which opposed and was estranged to God and Christ (somewhat similar to his rhetoric in Rom. 1). Paul explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 1–4 how important it is to separate Christ’s body from an eschatological cosmos (Martin 1999:176). The fact that Paul spoke of a “union” when he discussed a man having intercourse with a prostitute might have come across as strange to his Corinthian audience, but the Greek word that was in common use for coitus was *synousia*. This term implied the normal penetrator-penetrated scheme, which in the light of Roman sexuality had no abnormal connotations (unless the penetrated person enjoyed being penetrated). Paul, however, implied with this idea that when they were Christian it was in fact Christ that was doing the penetrating (Martin 1999:177). This notion implied thus a sin against not oneself but against Christ by having made Christ one (*synousia*; “being one with ...”) with a prostitute. In this way, the man, in the essence of Paul’s ambiguous rhetoric becomes a penetrator of the “evil cosmos”.

Paul was not so much concerned with whether someone should be married or not, although he stated that because of sexual immorality each man should have his own wife and every woman should have her own husband (1 Cor. 7:1–2). Paul saw marriage not as obligatory but as appropriate. Sexual intercourse was an obligation, but only within marriage. Married couples owned one another (1 Cor. 7:4). Paul did not wish for all to be celibate but wanted all to be able to resist sexual temptation and sexual immorality (Yarbrough 1985:96–99). As can be seen, monogamous relations were widely advocated even by non-Christian philosophers of Paul’s day. Paul’s phrase “passion of lust” can be found in just about any writing of contemporary

philosophers (Meeks 2003:100–101; Martin 2006:65), yet the moral domain in which Christians were urged to think about their own behaviour was a strongly restricted sphere. It was shaped by Jewish concepts like those of Philo (mentioned above) and stories about the One God and by the story about Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Its social boundaries were determined by the transformation of those who had obtained these stories as the only truth and through their acceptance became separated from the non-believers, including their families and former associates (Meeks 2003:100).

Paul wrote explicitly to the Corinthians about the antithesis between cultural values and values implicit in God's action. Paul specifically stated that God had chosen the commoners of this world, those who were looked down upon by others, to shame the adversaries of the Christian message (1 Cor. 1:26–31; see also Meeks 1993:62). Paul clearly used this tactic to shame the Corinthians in order for them to change their attitudes and behaviours. By this Paul also aimed to shame humble people who started to act high and mighty, thinking that they had accomplished enormous amounts of wisdom (Knust 2006:67–74). Paul also treated the idea of retreating from the world as being absurd. He upheld the opinion that the Christian, whether married or unmarried, whether sexually active or not, should take part in the world without being changed by it (Meeks 1993:62–65). In earlier writing Paul explicitly contrasted the works of the flesh to the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19–23). To him, the vices of the flesh were replaced by the Image of the Creator (Rom. 1). Those "insiders" who transgressed the pre-Christian vices became a threat to the Christian community and had to be corrected, shunned, or expelled (1 Cor. 5). Here we see exactly how sexual moral codes shaped group boundaries (Knust 2006:51–88).

Christians continued to expect the reign of God in its fullness as something that would happen in the nearby future, despite the fact that Jesus himself embodied the reign of God and called the disciples away from their parents, spouses and children (Mark 10:29). Paul's teachings about family and sexual ethics involved an imminent eschatological point of view (Knust 2006:113–120). He presented the present reality of God's reign in terms of belonging to Christ and its expected fulfilment in terms of Christ's return. It is important to note that Paul was not a philosopher who spoke about property or sexuality in an organised and abstract way. Paul was willing to

describe himself as Christ's slave, servant, or agent (De Wet 2015:46–51). This concept, however, was not something unique to the apostles. In Romans 1:1 and 1:6 there is reference to "Jesus Christ's called ones". Paul explained that Jesus' resurrection implied the resurrection of all believers at the appropriate time (1 Cor. 15:23–24).

In Galatians 5:24–25 Paul further stated that those who belonged to Christ had crucified the flesh with its passions and desires and that those who had the Spirit should conduct themselves according to the Spirit. This implied that they, like Paul, have become slaves of Christ and have dedicated their lives to purity in serving Christ. As with earthly slaves, the sexual identity of the slave of God was under the control of the Master (De Wet 2017:3–15). Christians should also be slaves to Christ and not sin and live lives of purity and avoid the devious ways of lust and desire (Knust 2006:51–53). The former slave of desire now became a slave of God.

Even though Paul spoke of egalitarianism in Galatians, he constructed a family hierarchy for the assembly in Corinth. He explained that he fell under the authority of God the Father of the Corinthian church and its members were like his children, subject to Paul's authority. From 1 Corinthians 3:21–23 we have the formation of a family hierarchy for Christians as being the children of God and only to a lesser extent the children of Paul. Paul, however, spoke his mind when he found something wrong in the community. He warned the assembly that the formation of factions was hazardous and that all belonged to Christ. Paul believed that the gospel would only be fulfilled when the present earth was no more. He believed that it was to happen while he was still alive (1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:51–52; see also Malherbe 1987:79–81). For Paul the end of the world was an imminent reality, which had to be taken into account in his time, and especially taken into account when looking at his sexual ethics. For Paul, with his eschatological worldview, it was important that those who "belonged" to God should live as if the new world had already arrived. They had to conduct themselves in ways synonymous with what God expected of them, being one with the body of Christ. Every aspect of life, including sex and the family, had to yield to Christ (Countryman 2007:190).

The general view in Corinth, as Paul taught it, was that Jesus had come to the earth only for a short while to be the atoning sacrifice for sinners and would soon return to rule the world (the *parousia*). That was the end time in which the assembly believed they lived (this same theme is prevalent in 1 Thessalonians; Malherbe 1987:80). In the meantime, Christians were living in a festival of liberation. Paul's take is that living on the edge of the end of time did not mean lawlessness but behaviour properly connected to that of the future Christian eschatology - an eminent eschatology did not mean less ethical restraint, but even more. The church should not tolerate behaviour that was unsuited in the dawning of the new time (Countryman 2007: 194). This view influenced Paul's sexual ethics, especially in 1 Corinthians 7, which we will now examine more closely.

### *2.2.1.3 Between Marriage and Celibacy: Paul's Sexual Ethics in 1 Corinthians 7*

Repeatedly the theme "remain as you were when you were called" comes to the fore in chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians. Paul advises:

- Vv 1–7: To the married, stay married with full conjugal rights.
- Vv 8–9: To the "unmarried" and widows it is good to remain unmarried.
- Vv 10–11: To the married (both partners believers) remain married.
- Vv 12–16: To those with an unbelieving partner, remain married.
- Vv 25–38: To "virgins" remain unmarried.
- Vv 39–40: The married are bound to marriage; to widows it is good to remain unmarried (Fee 1987:268).

A careful look at all of the above statements shows that there was considerable pressure in the church to dissolve or abstain from marriage, possibly because of the eminent eschatological teachings. Paul's answer was basically: it is "no sin to be married" (1 Cor. 7:28). However, he goes on explaining his own reasons for remaining single and unmarried.

In verse 1 Paul advised that a man who does not touch a woman does well. But in verse 28 he stated that a man does not sin, should he get married, but the man

should know that he will experience distress and could be spared such. Paul also added that if a virgin got married to a man she did not commit a sin. This view must have put pressure on those who were not married to stay so or abstain from sexual relations within marriage. The present pneumatic existence of the Hellenised might have been behind that principle. Hellenistic dualism might have been to blame with, at its roots, “spiritualised eschatology” as its expression. Those who were “spiritual” were above those who were earthly; marriage belonged to this passing age. In Corinth there were the so-called eschatological women who in their abstinence saw themselves as angelic and already part of eternal life (Fee 1987:269).

In a way, quite unlike Paul, there is little evidence of authoritative speech in 1 Corinthians 7. The argument alternated between men and women twelve times and every time there was a complete mutuality between the two sexes. In Galatians 3:28 Paul ascertained there was no difference between men and women. We may find that he addressed the “eschatological women” who had taken the message of salvation too far. Paul did however agree with one point of their reasoning, namely that it is better to be single (Fee 1987:270).

In verses 2–7 Paul forbade the practice of abstinence in marriage. This might explain why in 6:12–20 some of the men were going to prostitutes - which might have happened because prostitutes, slaves and mistresses were abundantly available and Christian men, unable to have sex with their wives, would often go elsewhere (Balch 1971:351–64). Throughout the chapter Paul made the statement that the Christian should not initiate divorce. However, based on the teaching that it is good not to have sexual relations, the Corinthians were arguing for celibacy in marriage and for some this was impossible (especially if some still felt strongly about procreation). In this case divorce was being recommended as a viable alternative—most certainly when the marriage partner one had to touch was a non-believer. Paul answered these questions by agreeing only to temporary abstinence for prayer (1 Cor. 7:5; see also Fee 1987:271). For those who wanted to get divorced in order to live a life of celibacy, Paul also had advice: any change in manner of life, such as a change from marriage to celibacy, could be an unnecessary and unfaithful attempt to make one more acceptable to God (Countryman 1997:201).

There are two basic interpretations for verses 1–7. The one most often used states that it is good not to get married but if one is weak in the flesh it is better to marry than to go to prostitutes such as those mentioned in 6:12–20. It need not be taken that to suggest (as that to avoid fornication seems to imply) that the main reason for allowing marriage or for allowing intimacy within marriage, is to provide an alternative to indiscriminate sexual relations, but that special cases of fornication in Corinth gave rise to Paul’s injunction here (Thiselton 2000:501). According to Wire (1990:82–90) verses 3–4 imply that part of the usual expectations due in marriage is the sharing of a home, rather than two individual lifestyles in which marriage obligations of mutual support and intimacy have been side-lined in the interests of the rights of the individual. Wire (1990:82–90) is also of the opinion that by using rhetoric Paul is manoeuvring people back to sexual relations with their marriage partners. Here we also find that the body of the husband belongs to the wife and the husband cannot abuse the wife because her body belongs to him. This means that there is limitation of freedom which is given with the presence of a partner (Thiselton 2000:505). Verse 5 basically implies that married couples should stop depriving each other both of intimacy and of companionship. Verse 6 points to the fact that this is a concession and not a command. Marriage is a concession in light of realities but celibacy is still the ideal. In light of Paul’s earlier warning in 5:9–10 the Corinthians were wondering whether sex was permitted at all (hence the occurrence of the more rigorous ascetics in the community, as opposed to the libertines).

This interpretation is not without difficulties. The introductory verses clarify that Paul not only commends celibacy but also advises an ascetic ideal (Fee 1987:273–275). Verse 1b and 5 imply: “stop depriving one another”. Verse 5 implies that when married, one’s body becomes the property of the one you are married to and you can no longer do with it as you like. Therefore, one cannot deny the other. It is important to note that for Paul Christian marriage is far more important than marriages in other cultures, because Christian marriages are sacred (this is still a presumption from his Judaistic background; Thiselton 2000:498–511). For Christians the marriage bed becomes the unitive place where mutuality comes into being (Fee 1987:280). It also implies that the word “defrauding” (1 Cor. 7:5) which is used by Paul means: do not take away what is someone else’s from him/her - one must keep in mind that the body of the wife belongs to the husband and the body of the husband to the wife.

This was meant as a concession. It should not happen if both partners do not consent to it and only for short periods at a time. This should take place so that you do not present an opportunity for your partner to be tempted by Satan. Satan can however only tempt in a situation of a lack of self-control (Fee 1987:281–283).

Verses 2 and 6 are of utmost importance: married people should not remain celibate but share full conjugal rights with their partners. This is to prevent the actions of fornication (*porneia*) that are spoken of in 6:12–20. Marriage becomes a safeguard against *porneia* (Harrill 2012:107). Again here lack of self-control enters, as well as the burning urges of desire that become important. Once again it comes to the fore that any form of desire is unacceptable to Paul. In the end Paul states his own view on the subject: he would prefer everybody to be like him and go along with their slogan, but the reality is that this is not always possible in real life (Fee 1987:273).

Paul is seen to affirm not only celibacy but also, basically, an ascetic position towards sexual relations. He tolerates sexual union only for the sake of the greater good. Doing so, he is seen for the first time as standing against his own Jewish tradition of “it is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18) and against the overriding strictures of procreation. So although Paul’s Judaistic background, especially with regards to sexual purity, shapes his thought, he also departs from conventional Judaistic sexual ethics when he places celibacy in a superior position over marriage and procreation (such views are more in agreement with non-mainstream Jewish groups, like those in the Qumran community).

To “have” a woman has not been proven in biblical Greek to mean to be married to a woman. It often implies: “to have sexually” or simply to be married or to have continuing sexual relations with a man or woman (see 1 Cor. 5:1, 7:29; but also Mark 6:18; John 4:18; see especially Fee 1987:278). What Paul thus answers to the Corinthian community concerning married partners is: it is permissible to have a full conjugal life (although celibacy is better).

The unadorned words of verses 7 to 9 in their context render the best understanding of the text. Paul maintained that he wished all were celibate like him, but that he realised that not all had the same gifts (this sounds very similar to Jesus’ words in

Matt. 19:12, although it is difficult to determine any mutual influence). Paul meant that he was free from desire or sexual need. This freedom made it possible for him to live without marriage in the first place. He hereby proclaimed that celibacy is a special gift, not a requirement, and this places the whole conversation on an entirely different level. Paul said that celibacy is for the celibate. When he concluded in verse 7: "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind". In the light of what was said beforehand it might be that the sexual life in marriage can be seen as another gift (Fee 1987:284–285).

For Paul both celibacy and marriage are gifts. He did not place one above the other in spirituality. In 1 Corinthians 12:4, 9, 28–30 as well as in Romans 1:12 the notion of a free gift received from God and relating to a specific task become clear. In modern post-Freudian terms it may be possible to say that Paul might have been able to subdue his own sexual desires to the effect that his creative energy became visible in his gospels on every possible level of awareness and that he exhibited no desire for anything else (Thiselton 2000:513). Paul admits that he is completely dependent on God and does not agree with philosophers of his time that men could be completely self-sufficient. Paul regarded desire as being in a constant state of need. This he could not and would not accept (Martin 2006:73–74).

Verses 8 and 9 are difficult to understand. It follows on a part where members of the congregation wanted marriages to be dissolved and were practicing celibacy in marriage. But to whom does the "unmarried" refer? Initially it was thought that this section referred to "a class of people who included widowers and men and women who were single, separated or divorced" (Thiselton 2000:516). But this might refer to the widows only. Being a widow in these times was arduous and almost every language contained a word for widow (Fee 1987:287) - in contrast, very little is heard of widowers, since most men remarried after their wives passed away.

Again here we have Paul's advice to remain who and what you are. But, if you cannot be content to be celibate it is better to marry. For the first time the word "burn" with desire appears (1 Cor. 7:9). This word is difficult to interpret. It might mean burn with desire or also burn in judgement. Medically, sexual desire was related to the

element of heat (that is, blood) in the human body. When Jewish sources are used, both these interpretations could be applied but this is not conclusive. The question must be resolved contextually. In light of 2 Corinthians 11:29 it probably means burn with passion. Paul advocates that those who commit sexual sins should rather marry. Paul does not offer marriage as the solution for the sexual desire of the youth but as a proper alternative for those already consumed by their desire for sinning (Fee 1987:288–289; Thiselton 2000:517).

In 1 Corinthians 7 the basis of Paul's argument about celibacy can be found. He advises that for those who could manage self-control it was better not to get married and stay chaste but for those who were too weak for celibacy, marriage remained the only option (Martin 1997:201). Christians should experience sexual intercourse only within the context of marriage and then in the absence of sexual desire and passion. Having sexual intercourse within the confines of marriage was the one individual's obligation to the other in order to protect him/her from *porneia* and satanic testing. His main aim was to restrain those members of the assembly who were out of control. As noted, in verse 7 he says that it is better to marry than to burn. All other texts such as medical, magical, physiological texts make it clear that everybody in the Graeco-Roman world would know what it meant to say that someone is "burning" with desire (Osiek & Balch 1997:114). The "burn" in 1 Corinthians 6:9 differs from the "burn" that is used in 7:9. In 6:9 there is together with the "burning with passion" a noun which denotes "the eschatological punishment of wickedness". In 6:9 Paul is not preaching that it is better to marry than to burn with passion. Here he is addressing particular Corinthian males who were using prostitutes (6:15–16) and who were involved in sexual immorality (Osiek & Balch 1997:114).

It is important that although Paul prefers celibacy, he does not deny the unmarried the conjugal state although he cautions that such a life would be difficult, especially if persecution intensified. Who were the virgins of whom Paul spoke (1 Cor. 7:25)? There are many theories as to who these virgins were, but Fee (1987:332–336) takes it to mean some young betrothed women along with their fiancés who were being pursued by the pneumatics and were now themselves wondering whether to go through with marriage. Paul gives a response from the man's point of view.

Paul's answer seems to be based on two assumptions:

- a. In light of the imminent *parousia* (and possible persecution preceding it), to marry is to have more trouble than necessary, and time is short already. So why then marry?
- b. Should one get married, one gets distracted from constant devotion to Christ (which is not the case for the unmarried), so celibacy is the better option (Fee 1987:336). Paul's advice is pastoral and should be seen in this light, even in the perceived Christian subculture of modern times. He did not intend to discourage people from getting married - even if he preferred celibacy - he was merely concerned that Christians would live in a state of anxiety if they got married because caring for spouses would distract them from God.

This leads to some other unexplained points taken up in other parts of 1 Corinthians, such as 4:1–5 and 6:1–6. The married would have trouble in this life due to present hardships, and Paul would like to spare them these, but Christ determines one's existence. In Christ one lives out the present life totally determined by the future which has already come (Fee 1987:337). According to Paul, there is the unmarried who "care for" (which is good) the matters of Christ as well as those who "are afraid for" (which is bad) their spouses - and they have an additional concern apart from that of being devoted to Christ. Paul warns that Christ does not want His children to have a life of distress but a constant life of devotion to Him (Fee 1987:337). By the present distress (there was famine in certain parts around Corinth in the fifties (50–54 CE), not to mention possible persecution), Paul had in mind the eschatological nature of the existence in the times that they lived in and for this reason preferred a life of celibacy as an obvious choice in order for the Christians to have less things to distract them in their devotion to God.

#### *2.2.1.4 The Problem of Desire, Fornication and Stuprum*

Furthermore, in the other Pauline letters the marriage between two Christian people is contrasted to that of the non-Christian population. Paul holds that a wife should be taken in "holiness and honour" (1 Thess. 4:6–7) in contrast to the impure traditions of

the gentiles. Sexuality and desire become important. The fear of filthy uninhibited sexuality comes to the fore. Marriage is seen as a protection against unbridled/uncontrolled/uncontrollable desire (1 Cor. 5–7) and as an expression of holiness (Rom. 12:2; see also 1 Pet. 1:14). In the New Testament the bond between husband and wife is strongly emphasised on the basis of Christian love and holiness and not carnal desire (Moxnes 1997:32).

Archaeological evidence that relationships were changing between men and women in the first century can be seen in the baths where men and women both went together, instead of the usual segregation in other periods (Ward 1992:131–134). Women were taking on some cultural roles that previously were only meant for men. Sampley (2003:267) notes that Plutarch advocated that marriage between a man and a woman involved friendship as well and no longer meant sex for procreation only. Sampley (2003:267) confirms that Plutarch even advocated pederastic relations because it included friendship, which did not necessarily exist in marriage. In Corinth we also have clear evidence of these sociological changes taking place, such as bathing together, friendship in marriage and women's charismatic speech in worship (Osiek & Balch 1997:115). This shift in gender and status roles, according to Osiek and Balch (1997:115), could only lead to conflict as could be seen happening in Corinth. Sexual relations between equal partners are a modern idea and not an ancient one. Yet, in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul makes the following statements about marriage:

- He introduces friendship themes in marriage.
- He emphasises mutuality.
- Each partner must share the other's body sexually.
- The relationship is supposed to decrease anxiety.
- The relationship should be ordered.
- Paul is strongly of the opinion that sexual relationships are to be exclusive, with one partner, not with prostitutes or slaves also (Osiek & Balch 1997:116).

The notion of celibacy might have led to the dissolving of some marriages, but Paul does not agree with this. Only in one instance does he approve of this and this is in

the case of women who might be seeking religious freedom, but then Paul advises them not to marry again unless with their former husbands. If the unbelieving partner in the marriage desired divorce it was to be granted for the sake of upholding the peace to which God had called His assembly.

Paul's take on sexuality and celibacy came into conflict both with the wishes of the reigning Emperor who wanted people to marry and have children and the wishes of some of the assembly who wanted celibacy in order to be committed to God (procreation was not only promoted in Judaistic thought, but also in Augustan legislation). Paul is of the opinion that there is more than one way to live a holy life. If two Christians are married then mutual sexual activity is holy; celibacy on the other hand is also holy and this is Paul's first choice. For those members of the assembly who seek asceticism but cannot control themselves he advises that it is better to marry, because it is no sin (Osiek & Balch 1997:117). Paul refers to the link between sexual immorality and idolatry in Corinthians 5 as well as in Romans 1:18–32. At the beginning of chapter 7 Paul is still concerned with sexual immorality. Paul responds to the asceticism and rejection of sexuality of the Corinthians by advocating marriage because of the danger of sexual immorality, which is related to the dangers of idolatry and the entire ecology of vice (Osiek & Balch 1997:104).

In a different context, Paul warns the congregation of Thessalonica to avoid the passion of lust as exhibited by the gentiles (Malherbe 1987:76). In the same stride Paul warns the members of the Galatian church to practice mastery of self. After all, they had "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). Paul, like most Christians of his time, believed that non-Christians were enslaved by desires and unnatural sexual behaviour. Paul believed that the world was infected with lust. Paul claims that the gentiles take their wives in the "the passion of lust" and that the gentiles have given themselves over to licentiousness. According to Paul, Christians should not visit brothels (Rom. 6:15–20), and his disciples maintained that Christian wives remain chaste and submissive and that male rulers such as husbands should rule their households well, as they were supposed to master control over themselves. Paul was concerned with marriage practices, sexual renunciation, adultery, incest, intercourse with prostitutes and other sexual acts (Knust 2006:51–52).

Paul considered marriage a mechanism by which desire could be eradicated. Desire, for Paul, was much worse than the act of having sex. Paul proclaimed that sex within the boundaries of marriage could eliminate desire. Paul, unlike other writers of the same period, believed that desire should be completely extirpated, even if it meant having intercourse. Other writers like the Stoics also advocated sex without desire (Martin 2006:65–76). Among many of the intellectuals of the first century control over desire was a very important point (Martin 1997:201). Paul's view on desire was simply different from that of the Stoics. Paul saw every human being as having received his/her identity from his/her place, either in "this cosmos" or "in Christ", and therefore the free will and moral agency that is a necessary prerequisite for the Stoic position is absent in the thoughts of Paul. Paul thought of humanity being threatened by cosmic forces, coming from outside, which could possibly enter the human body as pollution, thus fearing sexual desire as becoming a polluting force that threatened the Christian's body (Moxnes 1997:7).

1 Corinthians 7 is not the only place Paul speaks about the danger of desire. Holiness or sanctification is, according to Paul, God's wish for Christians (1 Thess. 4). According to Paul, Christian men should not possess their wives within the passion of desire like the gentiles do. Paul, like almost all ancients generalises the "ethnic other". All sexual behaviour outside his accepted frame of reference is simply made out as sin. Again *porneia* becomes the great factor separating Christians from Gentiles. Sexual desire in Paul's view was a cosmic enterprise threatening the Church. Martin (1997:214–216) states that Paul was of the opinion that the only way to avoid pollution by desire was for men to have control over their "vessels" (women) and use their own spouses for their sexual needs but yet Paul does not clearly entertain comfort with the idea of the existence of passion in this process.

In 1 Corinthians 4:4–5, for instance, Paul insists that those who are washed, that is sanctified and justified (6:11) must act that way. In chapter 6:13 Paul states that the body is not meant for fornication but for the Lord. With this statement Paul draws a parallel between the human body and God, as the human body and the soul are solely meant to belong to God. The church is meant to belong only to God. Paul encouraged the Corinthians rather to cleave to God than to prostitutes (1 Cor. 6:19–

20). Some Corinthian Christian men continued to make use of prostitutes after being baptized and becoming Christian (modern scholars call this the libertine position). This label is not accurate as many Greek and Roman men found it normal behaviour whether married or single, to have more than one sexual relationship (Osiek & Balch 1997:113). These men considered themselves deeply moral.

Paul insisted that a man who had intercourse with a prostitute was not unchanged by the act. The act was destructive to one's spirit and thus to one's relationship to God (Countryman 2007:198). Paul argued that the body of a Christian belonged to God. The body as a whole is a temple of the Holy Spirit. By implication, when one became a Christian, one immediately and irrevocably became a slave of God. In ancient times it was illegal and unheard of to show loyalty to any person or entity other than one's master. Having desire rule over any of one's senses as already mentioned, was like serving a master other than God because desire, in Paul's eyes, was addictive and thus he used this rhetoric (De Wet 2015:71–73).

Paul was of the opinion that disrobing and the act of sexual union with a prostitute opposed the spiritual union with God and Christ obtained by baptism, the body of the Christian became the slave of God. In answer to what must have been the Corinthians' question to Paul: "Is sexual intercourse allowed at all?" Keeping in mind the current medical and philosophical points of view, the answer is yes, but, every man should have his own wife and every woman should have her own husband (1 Cor. 7:3).

Musonius Rufus (*Fragment 13*; Osiek & Balch 1997:115), a contemporary of Paul, states:

The husband and wife, should come together for the purpose of making a life in common and procreating children, and furthermore, of regarding all things in common between them, and nothing peculiar or private to one or the other, not even their own bodies.

This was in line with the Stoic idea that was in direct opposition to the patriarchal world of the time. Musonius expresses these ideas as a ground for friendship in

marriage. Paul and Musonius went beyond the discussion of sexuality in terms of the expected sexual rules of their time where the female was not at all seen as on par with the male. Other philosophers of the same period, including Plutarch, praised pederasty because it included friendships but denounced the household love between men and women as devoid of mutual love or friendship (see Osiek & Balch 1997:115). Plutarch then, contradictory to this statement, argued against love between men and boys and said that a wife is a fitting, more graceful, unceasing, gratifying, and a constant companion (this may point to the fact that there was a domestication of principles in the early Empire if one should compare Stoic with middle-Platonist philosophy; (Osiek & Balch 1997:115).

The question remains: what did Paul understand as *stuprum*? Paul was clearly aware of gentile people of goodwill who maintained good moral values and standards in the Roman world. Before becoming Christian he must have been aware of the actions of all people were they Jews or not. He included all actions like those of the people who continued to seek evil and reject the truth as he saw it, because he saw it as *stuprum*. These included all immoral actions, idolatry, adultery, men who had sex with men, drunkards, thieves, those who were greedy, slanderers and swindlers in his definition of *stuprum* (Kruse 2012:115–127).

In his First Letter to the Thessalonians and Galatians, Paul reminds the members of the congregations that they are different from the gentiles in the sense that they have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24). For this reason, they, unlike the gentiles, should be able to resist temptation in the form lust. For them, it should thus not be a problem to resist temptation *and* for this reason they should not make themselves guilty of adultery. In a sense, Paul bundles all acts of adultery and *stuprum* within the concept of *porneia*.

When Paul established sexual ethics for Christians, he was not only concerned with proper marital customs; he is just as concerned about intercourse with prostitutes along with adultery (Knust 2006:52). This emphasis on marriage and the dynamics of *porneia* can be ascribed to the Christian’s ability to control his/her desires - self-control becomes the linking factor. As stated above, the Christian became a slave of Christ and was no longer a slave of desire, to practice self-control should thus not be

an issue. Also, to commit adultery, to Paul, was to take from someone else what did not belong to oneself – one can refer here to the son living with his father's wife. This in itself was to Paul, a concept that was completely unacceptable.

### 2.2.2 *Paul and Same-Sex Passion*

Paul knew Leviticus 20:13: "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them". This must have had an influence on the way Paul looked at same-sex love and Paul's concept of sin also exhibited clear parallels to that of the Judaistic views of his time. Paul's discernment of the nature of sin led him to the exact opposite of the view that human beings are able to proceed from their own situation to do what is good and right (Schnelle 2003:74–75). Judaism accommodated debates about the freedom of human will. In the Wisdom of Ben Sira the affirmation of freedom of human will can be found, as well as statements that humans are not free to choose. Paul assumed a view close to that of Sirach (33:11–15), which also has parallels in Qumran literature, namely that free will is entirely a predicate of God, who in His freedom chooses and rejects and from whose decision there is no appeal (Schnelle 2003:75).

With regards to same sex behaviour, both Leviticus 18:6–28 and 20:13 were of the utmost importance to the Jews. Philo gives a very long explanation of these two verses in which he relies heavily on the philosophy of unnaturalness also used by Plato (see Loader 2010:8–9). He even makes sex between men out to be a much larger sin than having sex with a woman who would be having her monthly period (*Special Laws* 3.37–42; in Colson 1937:499–502; for a broader overview of this issue, see Fonrobert 2000). Philo bases his argument on the fact that same-sex intercourse goes against the real purpose of sex, namely procreation (Loader 2010:9; see Gen. 1:28, 38:7–10), which is also in contravention of the Abrahamic covenant.

In the case of Sodom, the situation is similar. In this instance severe inhospitality occurred towards the guests who were potentially raped (Gen. 19:1–29). In the same passage Philo depicts the men of Sodom as overwhelmed by lust for pleasure to

such a point that they disregarded that which was natural. Loader (2010:5) states that the incident at Sodom which depicts violent inhospitality by means of attempted male rape in this passage of the Old Testament is an example of what Philo reflects on in strong Stoic tradition. According to this philosophy the Law only recognises sex between a husband and wife for the sake of procreation (see, for example, Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.199; in Barclay 2007:282–283, which reads: “The only sexual intercourse recognized by the law is the natural intercourse with a woman, and that only if it is with the intention of procreation. It abhorred male intercourse with males, and the penalty is death if anyone were to attempt such”). Philo depicts the visitors of Sodom as men being overwhelmed by the lust of others for pleasure that, according to him, goes against the natural order. Pleasure was not the purpose of sex, but procreation.

According to Loader (2010:10), one manuscript of *2 Enoch* which is almost contemporary to Philo speaks of sin that goes against nature in which the wasting of seed is involved, including sex involving male children and abominable acts with friends. In this manuscript both pederasty and male-to-male sexual acts become condemned as unnatural and unproductive. However, Loader (2010:10) also mentions that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the men of Sodom are found to be standing forehead to forehead and in doing so they were naked. This suggests something other than anal penetration.

When New Testament authors’ texts are interpreted, certain things should be taken into account, including whether they would have taken male-female sex as definitive and exclusive. In other words, it should be asked whether procreation was what these authors understood to be the “purpose” of sex. According to Loader (2010:11) it is unlikely that these authors would have taken texts like *4Q Instructions* (probably early second century BCE) and the *Damascus Document* (Hempel 1998:9–16) as definitive. When New Testament texts are read it becomes apparent that not all authors agree that marriage and procreation were the sole ideals.

But what was the nature of Paul’s own views regarding same-sex passion and the problems related to procreation? When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans it was

because he planned to visit them. He also tried to enlist their support for his planned mission to Spain. He probably wrote the letter whilst in Corinth (Schnelle 2003:305). He persuaded them of his intentions and gave a short summary of the basic message he preached. He let the Romans know that he was aware of the fact that some Christians had charged him with betraying the Christian faith. That is why in Romans 1:16–17 he proclaimed that his gospel held good news for both Jews and gentiles. Paul explicitly showed his Christology in verses 16–17 by referring to Psalm 67:12, Habakkuk 2:4 and he pointed to Psalm 139:8 (“O Lord God, the strength of my salvation”). In this way he stated that the gospel is not simply evidence about God’s plan to save but is a very powerful depiction of a God who saves (Schnelle 2003:310). Paul was also aware that the church in Rome had to be aware of his recent misunderstandings with the Galatian congregation and that he needed the support of the Romans. He returned to this theme in Romans 3:21–25 with a long supporting argument to show that all people have sinned and all people need redemption, Jews as much as gentiles. Faith saves humans who accept the gospel according to God’s will, granting the believer God’s righteousness. This makes it clear that the whole letter to the Romans is an unfolding of the Pauline Gospel, which simply implies that faith leads to righteousness, which in turn leads to eternal life.

This might be the reason behind the statements Romans 1:18–32, where Paul uses sexual sin, although typically related to gentile sexual practices, to show that all people are sinful and to get the attention of the Jews who might not have committed these sins but surely must have heard of them. Sexual sin is therefore used to essentially configure universal sin. Paul used the argument that the gentiles might have sinned by their polytheism but the Jews were just as guilty because of the contradictions between their orthodoxy and orthopraxy. This might be the reason for the radical turn in the beginning of Romans 2, having caught out the hypocritical Jew or proselyte. All are in need of God’s intervening righteousness (Loader 2010:12; Schnelle 2003:305, 314).

When writing the letter to the Romans Paul had in mind to resist the particularism of especially the Jewish Christians (Schnelle 2003:307). Paul meant to show in his letter to the Romans that both Jews and gentiles were under the power of sin (Rom.

3:20). This led to his argument that judgement according to works and justifications by faith alone without good deeds belong together. Sin is so powerful, humans can exhibit, in judgement, no works that could ever justify them and redemption can exclusively be obtained from faith in Jesus Christ. This can only happen through the grace of God, since humans are and will always remain sinful and will therefore continuously be in need of God's justification (Schnelle 2003:315). But if this is only a rhetorical strategy, what should we make of the sexual sins stated in Romans 1:18–32?

Countryman (2007:119) asks an important question: Why does Paul begin his letter to the Romans with an attack on purity and shame but leaves out the word "sin"? I refer to the matters mentioned beforehand but would like to mention the issue of purity of food, which was a great concern to the Christian community at Rome. Should Paul have moved on to this topic immediately he would have alienated those who were already distrustful of him. Paul used a very clever diatribe in "attacking" the gentiles, gaining the support of the Christian Jews whom he actually wished to reach. He first secured the support of these difficult supporters and then showed that the Torah by itself is not adequate to guarantee the superiority of the Christian Jews (Countryman 2007:119–120). In the eyes of both Loader and Countryman it is therefore a mistake to read Romans 1:18–25 as a sole attack on same-sex passion.

However, Loader is of the opinion that Paul stated God's goodness is revealed in Christ as delineated in Romans 1:16–17. God, however, directs his anger at people who suppress the truth by denying the existence of God who has made Himself visible in creation from the very beginning, leaving these people without any excuse (verses 18–20). Paul used Platonic arguments in his explanation of verses 18 to 23. Paul made it clear that not all humans/gentiles have followed the path of idolatry. Paul not only included actions - the actual worship of idols -but also psychology or mentalities (dark and confused minds). These actions and mentalities led, basically, to God saying something in the line of: deny my reality and in so doing dishonour me and I will make you deny your reality and dishonour yourselves (Loader 2010:14–15).

Paul clearly states in Romans 1 that people are themselves responsible for what they feel and what they do. This is also shown in Romans 1:32. It becomes clear that arguments implying that God is to blame for the people's actions bear no weight in the eyes of Paul. First Thessalonians 4:7 confirms that Romans 1:24 states that God gave these people over to the lusts of their hearts and impurity which in this context are not restricted to ritual or cultic impurity. The impurity/lusts of the hearts can be linked to Old Testament texts such as Numbers 15:39 which depict Israel's history as a litany of sexual impurity and are also used by the author of the *Damascus Document*. It needs to be taken into account that for Paul any form of excessive sexual desire is always wrong (Dunn 2006:121). The bodies being degraded are described with the Greek word *atimazesthai*, which implies that sexual shame or dishonour is brought on all parties involved, not only the penetrated party but also the penetrating or active party. This is a very important point to note in Paul's views on same-sex passion: he departs from ancient Roman distinctions between activity and passivity (the teratogenic grid) as explained in chapter 1. Paul emphasised his argument by mentioning that it was because the creature was honoured more than the Creator. He ranked idolatry in the first place and in the second place same-sex acts (Loader 2010:2016). It is no longer about the relationship between the active and the passive parties, but the relationship between the Creator and human creation. This is the basis of his argument.

The issue of women giving up natural intercourse is much more complex. It is generally accepted that in the ancient world female same-sex intercourse was frowned upon, but this is not necessarily what Paul implies here. Paul only expresses opinions on female homoeroticism in Romans 1 and 1 Corinthians 6:9. Nevertheless, because of Paul's authoritative status, his opinion on both male and female same-sex eroticism has a long lasting and very privileged authoritative position in churches today (Brooten 1996:195–196). Paul does not go on to explain what kind of unnatural intercourse the women take up as he does with the men, so uncertainty remains. It might mean anal intercourse or oral sex even with their own husband in order not to fall pregnant and only to have sex in order to enjoy sex (Brooten 1996:246). Abramson (1995:22) confirms that Plato, in his *Laws*, pointedly states that sex should be limited to spouses and for the sole purpose of procreation.

Neutel (2015:200) establishes the same rule concerning Philo, as does Satlow (2001:15) who shows the same for Ben-Sira, Josephus, and Pseudo-Phocylides.

Paul however, never explicitly made mention of his stance on procreation, not even in 1 Corinthians 7. Therefore it is more likely that Paul might be speaking of female same-sex situations here. What is of great interest is what Paul saw as natural and unnatural. Paul referred to the word *malakoi* in 1 Corinthians 6:9. Paul referred to women as being *hypandros* (which signifies the “under the rule of the husband”) in Romans 7:2, and the referral to shameless and degrading acts in verses 26 and 27 might point to the fact that he joined the band of seeing the passive male as being disapproved of as in the ancient world in general (Loader 2010:24). Paul also used the language of shame and dishonour (think of *atimazesthai*) in what is natural and unnatural for men and women in 1 Corinthians 11:6–15. It could be accepted that Paul shared the ideas of Philo which entailed the disease of feminisation on men that Philo feared (Loader 2010:26). In the light of this, having sex with a man if one was a man oneself, one dishonoured the order of nature in itself in not subjugating a woman, which was by natural order subject to a male. The problem of same-sex passion is therefore not only whom one subjugates, but whom one chooses *not* to subjugate. Same-sex passion is problematic to Paul not only because men subjugate men, but also because men are not subjugating women (and even worse, women may be subjugating one another, leaving the male party totally out of the equation).

Another way of looking at the passage in Romans 1 in question, namely verses 18–32, is to look at the letter as written in a kind of protreptic style. In this style, Paul suggested that these people in Rome who claimed to be wise were really fools. Therefore, verses 18–32 only describe confused people. They do not what they really want in spite of the fact that they really want to be in the right relation to God (Brooten 1996:199; see also, more generally, Stowers 1981). When Romans 1 is read in this way, many things start to make sense, like the “censure” (*elenchus*) which explains individual confusion and same-sex eroticism. Now, same-sex eroticism in the book of Romans clearly becomes visible as opposed to Paul’s understanding of the gospel. Same-sex eroticism becomes not only an ethical but also a theological issue, since the protreptic theory does not distinguish between

theology and ethics. Same-sex eroticism becomes a theological issue because someone who turns away from God misdirects his/her sexual impulses and becomes a slave thereof (Brooten 1996:199).

Scholars are often of the opinion that according to Paul, same-sex eroticism is a specifically gentile failure (Brooten 1996:203–204). However, seen in the context of the honour-shame defined sex-roles of antiquity, by ruling same-sex eroticism as something that is wrong, the early Christians could easily define themselves as over and above non-Christian society (Brooten 1996:204). Moxnes (1988:213) clearly states that for Paul the issue was very basic. It was one in which there was a blurring of the sex-roles and boundaries between genders as they were perceived. Such a blurring of sex-roles was perceived as a threat (since it also touched issues of class and social authority). Honour and shame were important aspects because in societal evaluation they helped with validation. The early Christians shared the opinion of their contemporaries that same-sex eroticism carried shame (Brooten 1996:213).

Like Chrysostom many years later, as we will see in the next chapter, for Paul female same-sex eroticism was much more disagreeable and thus Paul used less detail when he discussed it than when he discussed that of men (Brooten 1996:240). Another reason for first mentioning female same-sex eroticism was to emphasise the overthrowing of the “natural” order of things. Also, the women were spoken of as “their”, emphasizing that the women probably belonged to their men. In ancient times, women were only seen to have been able to be passive and could for practical purposes not have been active in sexual encounters (at least according to the teratogenic grid - this does not necessarily reflect realities on grassroots levels). To “exchange” natural intercourse implied that these women were capable of natural intercourse. Paul probably used the word to imply that people were aware of the natural sexual order of the universe and chose not to accept it (Brooten 1996:239–244).

It is interesting to note that Paul did not cite Genesis 1–2 in the passage of Romans 1 (which Chrysostom does in fact do, as will be demonstrated). It does reflect in verses 18–23, while verses 26–27 reflect Genesis 1:27. Here Paul shows how he believed men should relate to women; this is well attested also in Jewish literature.

Paul however moved from what is generally taken as wrong anatomical paring to what he believed was wrong theological paring, taking it as far as suggesting worship of birds and animals leading to “abnormal sexuality”. In Romans 1 Paul does not mention Adam or the fall from Paradise but he does so in 5:12. Paul, like his Jewish contemporaries, believed that sometime after the fall of Adam and Eve idolatry entered into the world, then came the story of the fall of the Watchers as is depicted in Genesis 6 and *1 Enoch*, bringing into the world things like magic, astrology, cosmetics (which were especially bad if used by males), warfare, and sexual immorality. These stories were also common in Greek and Roman societies. The Jews especially, used these stories to explain the existence of *porneia* (Martin 2006:52–53).

Martin (2006:54) is of the opinion that what Paul wanted to convey was that as a result of polytheism, God gave people over to become slaves of their desires of dishonour, resulting in a downward spiral of “bondage to sin”, drowning in the excesses of vice. If this is true, it implies that Paul must have believed that same-sex eroticism never existed amongst the Jews who abstained from idolatry. One has to bear in mind that Paul, in the rest of Romans, accused the Jews of adultery and dishonesty regarding the property of temples (Rom. 2:22). This is totally in keeping with Paul’s view that the Jews have not been punished with same-sex eroticism because they were not guilty of polytheism or idolatry (Martin 2006:55). We should again here remember that the “giving over” of the wicked to their evil desires is seen as an act in which the wicked are left to indulge *excessively* in passion, with no bridle. This is why there is such a close relationship between same-sex passion, idolatry, and other acts of vice.

Furnish (1981:13) notes that both Paul and the ancient moralists considered same-sex behaviour as: “the most extreme expression of heterosexual lust”. Chrysostom (*Homily 4 on Romans 1*) puts it slightly differently by saying that: “You will see that all such desire stems from a greed which will not remain within its usual bounds”. This implies that a completely natural urge becomes transformed into an “unnatural extreme” (Martin 2006:57). Again we have the suggestion of becoming a slave or subject to something other than God. It is important to bear in mind that Paul never has a positive word to say for any kind of sexual desire. Paul advises men to get

married so as not to have desire, in order to preclude the possibility of it. For Paul the problem is not sex, the problem is desire (Martin 2006:59).

## 2.3 CONCLUSION

In the time he lived, Paul might have been seen as an unconventional figure. Yet his opinions, which were grounded in an exemplary education and excellent rhetorical prowess influenced the lives of people for two thousand years to follow.

He was convinced that he lived in a time when the second coming of Christ would happen soon, and this fact influenced many if not all of his arguments. He opposed any form of existence that lacked self-control, and in this way broadly agreed with many of the philosophical viewpoints prominent during his lifetime. This was in essence also his manifest way of establishing what he saw as manly and how he proclaimed manliness to be maintained.

He held sexual lust in far less regard than he held any form of desire. Sexual desire, no matter what form it took, was considered dangerous and in some way instigated, or at least utilised, by evil forces. In his view, desire led to all kinds of evil, it was the root cause of all kinds of evil committed by humans. To Paul, once one became Christian, one became a slave of Christ in totality. All the rules of slavery applicable in his time to slavery applied to slavery to God. This entailed complete and utter loyalty. One could only serve one Master once one became Christian, that master was Christ. To be disloyal in any way to this Master, meant that one was a slave to one's desires and that the only reward this slave could expect was divine punishment. Desire, not sexual intercourse, was the problem to Paul - this changed as the church's stance on sexual morality developed, as we will see in the next chapter.

Paul adhered to the rules he set for others to the letter himself, he often verbalised that he wished that everybody could possess the same gift he had (that is, celibacy, and by implication, enough self-control *not* to burn with desire); however, he realised that this could not be possible, and for this reason only was he willing to negotiate the terms of acceptable sexual morality. In the next chapter, we will look specifically

at how Chrysostom read Paul and applied (and transformed) Pauline sexualities in his own moral discourse.

## CHAPTER 3

### JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S APPROPRIATION OF PAULINE SEXUAL MORALITY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Writers in the early Christian tradition did not add much to the catalogue of sexual transgressions already found in late antique Roman thought. They marked sexual desire as the origin and foundation of human impiety and argued that the denial of sex and marriage was a sign of perfection and therefore of manliness. They used both established philosophical and biblical idioms to express these sentiments and thus laid claim to be true inheritors to the newly transformed classical legacy. Still, those who forbade marriage and sex altogether were seen as heretical (for example the Manicheans) (Kuefler 2001:161). In late antiquity, the time of John Chrysostom, we therefore have a Christian morality that has developed quite extensively from what we have seen in Paul. In this chapter, which is also the core of this entire study, we will look more closely at how Chrysostom appropriated Pauline sexual morality in his own thought in the confines of his own context. First, a general discussion of late antique sexual morality will be provided, followed by a brief introduction to who Chrysostom was. Finally, we will investigate how Paul influenced (or not) Chrysostom's sexual ethics.

#### 3.2 DYNAMICS OF SEXUAL MORALITY IN CHRISTIAN LATE ANTIQUITY

The evolving Christian philosophy of sex left no place for the customary liberty of the Roman man to pursue a variety of sexual indulgences. According to Kuefler (2001:162), some early Christian thinkers alleged that a man who transgressed sexually was even inferior to a lapsed Christian who offered to pagan gods, since the latter acted only under obligation whilst the former acted freely (see also Elliot 2011:37). Moreover, during the early fourth century, Lactantius (*Divine Institutes* 6.23) could effortlessly argue that it was the devil that instilled sexual sins in

humankind (see also Gethrie 2006:92; Kuefler 2001:162). Thus, when we examine the period of late antiquity, while many continuities with earlier Roman sexual moralities were still existent (Masterson 2014:19–40); there were also some extreme alterations.

For example, Jerome, one of the writers who wrote the most on marriage and sex was of the opinion that no scheme existed to keep the chastity of a Roman male untainted (this is the main argument of his *Epistle 22 to Eustochium*; see also Hunter 2007:1–14). Adultery and seduction were frowned upon and Christian authors believed that all cases of sexual licentiousness, or *stuprum*, were equal to adultery (De Wet 2015:222–224). Notwithstanding universalisation of sexual transgression, some still felt compelled that a Roman male had free right of entry to visit brothels, and seduce and use slaves sexually as long as they did not exploit someone else's slaves without the permission of the owners (Kuefler 2001:164). Jerome (*Epistle 77.2–3*) also accentuated that the rules put in place by secular imperial government differed greatly from the rules established by Christ and that society required and necessitated one set of rules for humanity but Paul a completely different set of regulations mattered. Jerome (*Epistle 77.3*; as well as Chrysostom, *Homily on 1 Cor. 7:2, "For fear of fornication"* 4; in Roth 1986:85) was also rigorous about the fact that for Christians the same instructions that existed for Christian women had to exist for Christian men, as will become clear, which is of great importance later in this study (Kuefler 2001:164).

All Christian authors from Paul onwards denounced adultery in its broad extent. However, some non-Christian groups also commenced to cultivate this kind of thought. Adultery (which now included cases that would earlier have been considered *stuprum* or simply sexual promiscuity) became increasingly regarded with universal disapproval (De Wet 2015:225–230). Neither Jesus nor Paul were very precise in their pronouncements on adultery, and the degree to which the earliest Christian convention necessitated an interpretation of adultery in anything other than the traditional Roman sense of sex with a married woman is uncertain. Ambrosiaster, in *On Adultery 1.8.8* (in Kuefler 2001:165), expressly forbade adultery and any extra-marital affairs (which would include slaves and prostitutes) for men. The early Christians appealed to emotion as well as scripture in their arguments to

limit the sexual contacts both women and men had. The constant re-iteration of these rules shows that the Church Fathers knew they had limited Biblical support for their opinions and felt it necessary to rely on other methods to prevent Christian men from engaging in what they might not otherwise have considered sinful (Kuefler 2001:165).

Late ancient Christian writers, according to Kuefler (2001:165), preferred rational arguments to biblical prohibitions to prove their points. Paul used the Greek word *pornoi*, referring to those who engaged in *porneia*, which sometimes meant “sexual offenses” in a broad sense (see also Harper 2013:163–164). As Kuefler convincingly demonstrates, Jerome, in his Latin translations of Paul’s works, translated *porneia* as *adulteria*, adultery, that is, “men who have sex with married women” in one passage, and *fornicarii*, “men who frequented brothels” in another (see 1 Cor. 6:9 and 1 Tim. 1:10; Kuefler 2001:355). This shows that Jerome’s sexual-ethical terminology and interpretations were translated into the Latin Vulgate, which became exceedingly influential by the Carolingian period. Jerome (*Epistle* 14.5; in Kuefler 2001:166, 356) declared that, no man should “deny that there is a lustful sacrilege” once he “violated the members of Christ and the living sacrilege that is pleasing to God through shameful impurities with the victims of public lust,” meaning, to have enjoyed sex with prostitutes. But it may be that some Christian men refused to accept as sinful exactly what Jerome and other writers considered shameful and damning (De Wet 2015:228–231). The fact that these authors spent so much time promoting these views, may point to a very different situation on grassroots level.

The early Christians had clearer biblical exemplars for the antagonism of “sex between males”. Paul’s lists of sexual offenders that encompassed “effeminate men” (*malakoi*, the Greek equivalent of the Latin *molles*) and “males who lie down with males” (the Greek term *arsenokoitai* is often translated into Latin as *masculorum concubitores*) provided them with enough material to write (Martin 2006:37–50). These stipulations seemed to indicate a denunciation of both the male who penetrates and the male who is penetrated. However, the specific significance of both terms is unclear. The legend of Sodom (Gen. 19) also provided a basis for the condemnation of the penetrating male since the Sodomites were thought to have wanted to penetrate the strangers and not be penetrated by them. Christian

moralists, however, seldom made use of these biblical precedents in their condemnation of sex between males, which might be a reflection of their own uncertainty about the interpretation of the relevant biblical passages. They resorted to a typical Roman rhetoric of the violation of nature (Brooten 1996:12–23). The nature that was violated through sexual relations between men was not human nature but masculine nature, distorting the distinctions between masculine and feminine behaviour. Christian leaders' invective against the penetrated male was now equally applied to the penetrating male in their denunciation of sexual relations between males (Kuefler 2001:166–167).

### 3.3 MASCULINITY AND SEXUAL IDENTITY IN LATE ANTIQUITY

During the period of late antiquity, masculinity was the main quality that determined one's sexual identity and honour, and thus requires thorough explanation if one wants to understand Chrysostom's sexual ethics.

#### 3.3.1 *Virtue and Masculinity in Late Antiquity*

Virtue formed an integral part of Roman masculinity in late antiquity (De Wet 2014a:227–250). Especially four characteristics were of the utmost importance in determining manliness, namely self-control, wisdom, justice and courage - these were also the cardinal virtues of classical antiquity. In addition to these, military skill, dignity, prosperity and generosity were added (Kuefler 2001:19). It is important to note that these characteristics are a summation of the ideals of both the Stoic and Neo-Platonic schools of philosophy. These were the characteristics one should achieve to reach the very summit of human existence, which was called virtue (*virtus*) (Ward et al 2016:54). Women were seen to be the opposite of men. They lacked *virtus*, in other words, they lacked moral goodness - the linguistic correlation between *vir* and *virtus* testifies to the association of virtue with manliness and, in effect, sexual honour. Women were seen to be by nature dissolute, foolish, capricious, and cowardly. Men were considered persons guided by reason and rationality and women by emotion and sentimentality. Oftentimes the virtue of women is highlighted, but then usually as a strategy to shame men.

As in earlier times, noted in chapter 1, women were still seen to be men turned inside out (Stimpson & Herdt 2014:453). Some schools of Roman medical thought supported this idea that women had exactly the same sex organs as men, but that female genitalia were just situated on the inside of the body. In fact, the late ancient Christian bishop and physician Nemesius (*On the Nature of Man* 25.86; in Sharples and Van der Eijk 2008:155) believed: “Women have all the same parts as men, but inside and not outside”. The vagina was seen as an inverted penis, the fallopian tubes as the vas deferens and the ovaries, perceived as the testis (Lacquer 1990:87–90). There, however existed no equivalent for the uterus which made this theory only valid up to a certain point. This implies that women were not only biologically but also psychologically recognised as the opposite creature. This deliberation directed medical belief well past the Middle Ages (Kuefler 2001:20–21). Roman writers metaphorised the hardness of the male body to its moral respectability and self-discipline which they distinguished men to possess and the softness of women to characterise their love of luxury, languor of mind, their susceptibility to emotions and their loose principles. This hardness and softness were also reflected in assumed sexual roles, hard men were understood to be penetrators and sexual invaders. The softness of women was to reflect their accessible passive role during sex and in society more generally (Kuefler 2001:21; Bartsch 2006:175).

There did, however, exist hazards to this deftly structured scheme of the Romans, like the presence of hermaphrodites, who during the time of the early empire were disinterestedly left to die as monsters, but during the time of the later empire were treated differently. By the time of late antiquity hermaphrodites were marginalised for their sexual indistinctness and to them were randomly assigned sexual categories of maleness or femaleness. The Roman system overlooked the female aspect of these persons and amalgamated them within the class of males (Kuefler 2001:22–23). They could marry a woman but could not get married to a man (Bolich 2007:111).

The Romans of late antiquity, as Kuefler (2001:24–25) shows, also succeeded in dealing with soft men, or “virtueless males”, and “manly” females, because their ambiguities threatened the whole equation of masculinity with moral excellence. They simply created new categories of women. Those men who failed to live up to

the expectations of Roman masculinity were simply classified by authors as having a feminine identity and denied the privileges of men. The so-called un-manly man was socially effeminised, and all socially negative aspects connected to women applied to these men (De Wet 2014a:228–230). They were simply thought of as dissolute, irrational, passive and inferior. The term *mollitia* (softness) applied in equal amount to them (somewhat like “softies” today), while other terms like *mollis* (soft), *eviratus* (unmanned), *effeminatus* (effeminate) and *muliebriarius* (womanly) as well as the term *semivir* (half-man) were also used (see especially Kuefler 2001:24–25).

There even existed a late ancient discourse, even though the author thereof is unknown, known as the *Book on Physiognomy*, which is a physiognomical description for the presence of half-men, giving physiological features of semi-masculinity like fine-hair and soft-feet, a husky voice, elevated eyebrows and dainty steps (Kuefler 2001:25). Effeminate personality traits could be made obvious in any body part where the left part of the body was larger than its right equivalent. Physiognomy was still as imperative in late antiquity as in earlier times. The fifth-century medical writer Caelius Aurelianus (in Kuefler 2001:25) also pathologises unmanly men by reasoning that they were diseased (though not a typical disease) - the disease being a corrupted mind (*corruptae mentis vitia*). Effeminacy was thought to have been a chronic disease, which displayed itself at conception, taking place when the father and mother’s seeds challenged each other instead of consolidating each other. This “disease” was finally the consequence of too little virility and not sufficient masculine self-control (Kuefler 2001:25–26).

To separate unmanly and manly men in society helped to sustain the moral excellence in Roman society. This was done in order to uphold the Roman male’s dominating role in society when its legal basis was challenged. If the effeminate men were not truly men but could have ruled in society, then all men - effeminate or not - could assert themselves to be virtuous (Langlands 2006:2). This was a threat to conventional Roman masculinity.

Unmanly men could be separated from truly manly men by means of the legal concept of *infamia* (ignominy). This term could be used to make a man accountable of a wide array of misbehaviour such as disgraceful or illicit deeds from burglary to

inappropriate marriages; but *infamia* was most commonly used for acts associated with unmanliness (Masterson 2014:19–29). When somebody was disgracefully dismissed from the army, for instance, he could be categorized as unmanly. Any man culpable of *infamia* or *mollitia* was not permitted to act as an assessor, to act as legal witness, or to bring allegations before court apart from in cases of sedition. These men, like women and slaves, were also not allowed to attest a will. To differentiate between the manly and unmanly was to demarcate visibly the margins through gendered identity (Kuefler 2001:30).

For women the same applied. When showing the least sign of virtue greater than that expected of them: courage, equanimity or sexual modesty they were seen as masculine. They then fell into the category of the aggressive or “manly” woman (*virago*). At times manly women were considered in a positive light, but when they started to overcome their subordinated role in society, then they would become subject to stringent criticism - this was the case for Christian and non-Christian moralists (Cloke 1995:4–17). For the praiseworthy, however, using the myths of the Amazons of the Roman cult of Bellona, the goddess of war, virtuous qualities could be praised while leaving the intellectual equation of virtue and masculinity intact. Although Roman authors wrote about such virtues as “unnatural” and emphasised their oddities and unexpectedness, it may be said that a kind of negotiation of gender boundaries might have existed (Kraemer & D’Angelo 1999:24). It might not have been expected of women to act in a manly fashion, yet it was praised, although in a way also frowned upon.

Christian leaders in late antiquity used the subordinated masculinities (such as the suffering yet manly martyr, the free but enslaved slave of God, and so on) of the late ancient man and reaffirmed the manliness of men, including their sense of difference from the superiority of women (Kuefler 2001:6; De Wet 2015:127–135). They enabled men with previously subordinated masculinity (like being known as a slave of God or a suffering martyr, or even a physically “infertile” monk) into a position of hegemonic masculinity by means of the rhetoric of manliness and unmanliness. This was in part due to the fact that political and social alterations had endangered the social models of Roman communal life. Christendom promised to be a “manly” religion which helped the “new religion” to assert a manly role and in this way

empowered men to now once again play a more authoritarian part in Roman life (Kuefler 2001:6).

During late antiquity when the Empire became Christian, then, men, whether Christian or not, especially men of the aristocracy, were driven by a desire to be manly or at least appear as manly as possible. This impacted on their everyday lives in personal and public spheres and also had a pronounced impact on their religious understandings and aptitudes (Masterson 2014:30–34). Those who shaped Christian ideology used this two-edged sword attached to manliness very effectively. As men of aristocratic status became converted to Christianity, they carried with them this fear of appearing less manly, which also had a stimulus on the development of Christian ideology (Kuefler 2001:1–2). Such men were in fact ensured by the leaders of the early church that their masculinity would be safeguarded by the sanctions of the church.

But this new Christian masculine code was all but simple. Relying on the notion of homosociality (rather than homosexuality per se), Masterson is of the opinion that during late antiquity such sturdy anti-homosocial inclinations, as is commonly assumed by modern scholars, did not yet exist. This is clarified by Masterson (2014:28–30), especially in the meticulous expression used in the two laws issued against “homosexuals” by Flavian and Theodosius, which indicated that the elite legislators were well-acquainted with the prohibited idioms of male-to-male relations. Homosociality endeavoured to move beyond the unsophisticated sexual focus, and illustrated that same-sex desire in late ancient times inferred an allegory for friendship and augmented the standing of authority. It also served as a symbol for the admireability of the man who was coveted. One’s worth could metaphorically become established in one’s attractiveness to other men (Masterson 2014:30–31). There was therefore a sustained tension between the conundrum of same-sex sexual relations, on the one hand, and broader articulations of homosociality commonplace to the late ancient Roman cultural vernacular.

Conveying same-sex desire towards a person could operate as a motion of advancing the grandeur of an individual of superior status or lifting the social status of someone of lesser social status. Homosociality became a vital aspect of late

ancient men's perception of their proportioned friendships and social standings towards one another. It was thus in no way something that could be eradicated from society - in spite of the *Codex* and the fact that the number of men being killed for "homosexual" crimes had doubled from 200 CE to 400 CE (Masterson 2014:31–35). It afforded a means of making the steep dissents of social standing in Roman society more bearable (Masterson 2014:35). However, a collision occurred between ideal and realised moralities, and masculine realities proved to be irresistible towards the authorities who both were finding fault with articulations of homosociality while at the same time, utterly, boosting such expressions and relations. This had a noteworthy bearing on the real definition of manliness in late ancient times, and is often unheeded by modern scholars (Masterson 2014:2).

### 3.3.2 *Transcendence and the New Manliness*

An otherworldliness of the masculine profile was created because of the metaphors created by homosociality and the laws and the less formal statements condemning them. Brown's now classic article on "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity" (1971:80–101) showed unequivocally that the holy man turned into a new standard of manliness, and his masculinity is founded upon his transcendence. Burrus, in her aptly titled monograph, *"Begotten, Not Made": Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (2000), has made similar findings with regards to the (re)formation of masculinity in the development of the Christian creed and Christian image of God. Masterson (2014:35) further maintains that masculinity during late ancient times should be assessed by a scale of estimation of which the coordinates are unlimited or supernatural. This point with regards to Christian masculinity is also affirmed by Burrus (2000:36–79).

Accordingly the struggle that comes to exist between the positive elicitations of male-to-male attraction/sex and the disapproval thereof in the *sacra generalitas* "can only be resolved by using some place beyond human morals and the laws of this world" (Masterson 2014:35). This suggests a transcendent means of assessing late ancient manhood. Kuefler (2001:70–76, 209, 282) also used this idea when he presents the eunuch as a symbol of the progressively "weakening" man (a subordinated masculinity) in late ancient times and the bishops who saw themselves as pre-

figuring the “Brides” of Christ. He regarded them all as no different from eunuchs or incontinent monks.

In addition to this emphasis on transcendence emphasised by Masterson and Kuefler, Gleason (1995:166) states that late antiquity can be marked as the time when the elite males started to draw on extra-social sources of validation, and no longer relied on the approval of their peers to an unprecedented extent, thereby fostering eccentric behaviour and displaying larger than life personalities, for example Athanasius, Constantine and Julian. This implied that they no longer needed a group of locals to develop an identity; they did however need the group to whom they showed off their identities. Then, more than ever, the notion that man equalled mind and woman equalled body came to the fore. This was because to the late ancient elite male, manhood inferred a measure of transcendence and lucidity (Masterson 2014:37). A heightening of rational activity versus illogical passivity developed. This made the claim to transcendence even stronger, and suddenly literature of the time flourished with miraculous behaviour of men (this can often also be seen in the writings of holy men (Brown 1971:80–91)). The ideals men strived to connect to were things not of this world. The fact that the Theodosian and Flavian laws had to be written confirm that the privileged were not only acquainted with same sex desire/action, but substantiates that it occurred between such men - denouncement entails familiarity (Masterson 2014:38). Transcendent homosociality was to the elite men of the time, via the logic of all possibilities, an exciting conduit for conveying transcendence and connecting them to a place other than earth; it animated their imagination and made them feel more alive (Masterson 2014:38–39).

### 3.3.3 *The “Manliness” of Christian Bishops*

Along with an emphasis on rational transcendence, paradoxically, however Christian men in late antiquity knew that their religion required of them to submit to authority, although to an authority higher than that of the Emperor or his government, namely God. This entailed assuming a feminine position which was a paradox in becoming “brides of Christ”. This submission, however, enabled them to take up a new form of transcendent and subordinated manliness in the form of bishops who in their position of intimacy with God, allowed them to become even more masculine and

transcendent than the Emperor. The episcopacy laid new underpinnings for homosociality. The embrace of episcopal leadership permitted men of the aristocracy of the later Roman society to liberate their political identities and social superiority and to achieve manliness (Kuefler 2001:125).

Christian bishops held power as “feminine” associates of a Ruler even more authoritative than the Emperor. They were the brides of Christ. They used this idea as the essential feature of their authority. Despite its unmanly undertones, it exhibited their intimacy with God and their entitlement to act as mediated officials of divine power. The metaphor of the bride of Christ had an extended Christian tradition but it was Ambrose who first expanded on it (in Kuefler 2001:137–138). To explain the notion of an individual and communal bride of Christ, the feminine gender of the Latin noun *anima* and the Greek noun *psyche* were used. Both these words mean “soul”, which was contemplated to be the nucleus of the self in classical philosophical language. The two symbols of the church as collective bride (since the Greek term for church, *ekklēsia*, is also feminine) and soul as a word for an individual bride was so intertwined in Christian writings that they are sometimes hard to disconnect. They both allow Christian writers to put themselves, individually and collectively, in the position of the feminine in relation to a masculine God (Kuefler 2001:137–136).

This was settled by staging the Christian God as the ultimate masculine form of moral excellence and power according to gender standards associated with *virtus*. All people are in a submitted position (thus feminine) to this ultimate and divine form of masculinity. This form of submission allows for a position of authority over others even though it is paradoxical (Kuefler 2001:137–141). However it is of the utmost importance always to bear in mind that Christian writers referred to themselves as submissive, thus basically feminine in relation to God. This was complemented by strict sexual renunciation, which no doubt influenced their reading of scripture, and also their views of masculinity and sexual morality.

Despite the conjugal, and even at times erotic, language used to describe the relationship to God, Christian writers proclaimed that sexual desire was the origin of human sinfulness. They argued that the renunciation of sex and marriage was a sign

of perfection and thus a sign of manliness (Brown 1988:3–14). This implied that to be manly meant to abandon marriage in support of being the bride of Christ. Sexual renunciation was an ultimate rather than a directive and those who forbade sex and marriage altogether were often seen as heretical since the continuation of sexuality and marriage helped to preserve masculine authority outside the formal ecclesiastical structures (Kuefler 2001:161; Hunt 2016:69). Yet, as emblems of Christian manliness, the bishops were the new guarantors of Christian masculine identity.

### 3.4 JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: BASIC BACKGROUND

I will now look more closely at one such bishop, namely John Chrysostom. The necessary introductory biographical information and some important assumptions of Chrysostom's views on asceticism and women will be discussed, after which we will proceed to his thought on Paul and Christian sexual morality.

#### 3.4.1 *Biographical Overview*

John, who would later be called "Chrysostom", meaning "the golden-mouthed", was born in Syrian Antioch around the year 349 CE, on the banks of the river Orontes. Antioch was a significant commercial city and right next to the highway that led from Asia to the Mediterranean (Kelly 1995:1–4). The city was venerated for its schools and professors. It was also the administrative and military headquarters of the Eastern Empire and the seat of the Syrian governor. It was comparable in size to both Constantinople and Alexandria and had a multicultural, mostly Greek-speaking community.

Although Antioch had a noteworthy Jewish community with its own synagogue, the majority of the citizens were Christian and the city contained several churches. Antioch and its surroundings were an area of great divergences. Some residents had a passion for horse-racing and the theatre, while the adjacent desert regions including mount Silpios, which was becoming inhabited by hermits and monks, who, in submission to what they regarded to be the call of Christ, had turned their backs on civilization and the futilities of the world (Brown 1988:305–309). The monastic

ideal with its directive to throw off the predicaments of everyday life, most significantly the desirability of sex, had been all-encompassing through the Christian East since the commencement of the fourth century (Elm 2012:328–330; Kelly 1995:1–2). Nowhere did it take on more peculiar forms than at Antioch (Vööbus 1958:12–21). These monks were honoured by the multitudes even though they were regarded with disdain by the sophisticated citizens of Antioch - Christian and non-Christian alike. They were treated with reverence whenever they entered the city particularly during epochs of catastrophe (Kelly 1995:3).

Chrysostom's family was well off. His father was most probably a significant civil servant. This idea corresponds well with what Chrysostom wrote in his work *On the Priesthood* 1 (in Neville 1996) where he stated that his widowed mother, who was of fair affluence, did not squander her inheritance and dowry but spent it sensibly in order to afford him with a good education (Jones 1953:171–173). Chrysostom's mother, Anthusa, was a Christian and he was raised Christian but had not been baptised as an infant (as was commonly the practice). As a boy Chrysostom must have undergone the standard education in the Graeco-Roman world, which had not changed much since the fourth century BCE (Cribiore 2007:1–12). Boys were taught reading, writing and basic arithmetic and from the age of ten to fourteen had to attend grammar school where they obtained education in Greek classical literature, including poetry, prose and orations of particularly that of Demosthenes, Homer, Menander and Euripides. Students had to study long passages by heart and comment on them. They had to take feasible guidance from these lessons and learn how to employ them. Chrysostom probably closely followed this school curriculum (De Wet 2015:127–131). The problem was that most of these works had pagan contents and to the thoughtful Christian student this might have been problematic, because it contrasted greatly from the scriptures; yet for the Christian student no alternative form of education existed (Kelly 1995:6). Thus, the role of Greek education, or *paideia*, is crucial to read as a backdrop to Chrysostom's works.

The next stage of education Chrysostom entered was training in rhetoric. He possibly trained under Libanius and Andragathius and his fellow pupils were Theodore, who later became bishop of Mopsuestia, and Maximus, who later became the imminent bishop of Seleucia (Malosse 2008:273–280). Here Chrysostom

acquired all countenances of composition and civic speaking, including the formulation and delivery of speeches for all possible occasions. It is important to note that Libanius was openly displeased with the promotion and growth of Christianity (Kelly 1995:6–7).

Furthermore, there were aspects in Chrysostom's years as a youth that influenced his worldview as an adult, for example, the reign of the pagan emperor Julian and the rise of Arianism (Kelly 1995:10–11). Initially as a young adult Chrysostom cherished going to the theatre and law courts. It may be assumed that he was being mentored for a career as one of the clerks who abetted the appropriate ministers in outlining official rescripts, constitutions and, at times, legislation. However, Chrysostom, together with his childhood friend Basil, resolved not to follow this path but to join the monastic (and later, priestly) life. Chrysostom was easily diverted by worldly affairs whereas Basil was never concerned with such matters, resulting in a break in the strength of their friendship. But this did not last long (Mayer & Allen 2000:3–8).

Chrysostom, after some time (how long exactly is not known) loosened himself from worldly matters, revitalised his friendship with Basil and the two elected to put up house together. Anthusa, Chrysostom's widowed mother, was not happy with the idea and persuaded Chrysostom that he could not leave her a widow (of a son) a second time. His mother's petitions terminated their plans. After this, Chrysostom attended services held by Meletius and was so enthused by the latter's discoursing that he advanced himself for baptism and devoted himself to the service of Meletius whom, by then was regarded as the leader of the orthodox Christians in Antioch (from 360 until 368 CE when he was restored as bishop; Kelly 1995:15–17; Vidaurrazaga 2007:161).

Chrysostom carried out liturgical, pastoral and secretarial obligations for Meletius, and devoted his life to learning scripture and attending church (Mayer & Allen 2003:17–20). Chrysostom now persuaded the previously mentioned Theodore and Maximus, who were his fellow students, to relinquish the world and live lives devoted to Christianity and the church. When Chrysostom had turned his back on a worldly career, he forsook everyday social life in support of the life of serenity that is the

ascetic retreat. He accepted the habit and mannerisms adopted by Christian monks and directed himself to the study of the Bible and to making regular visits to church for prayer (Kelly 1995:14–23).

Chrysostom then went on to study under Diodore who was in charge of the ascetic schools. Diodore was well certified to tutor others in asceticism; having imperilled himself to such severe corporeal mortification that he was in grave physical health. Diodore's "school" was called the *asketērion* - but what the exact nature of this institution was, is uncertain (Kelly 1995:19–20). Chrysostom at that time could not have lived in a monastery as he was still living with his mother and carrying out duties for Meletius; also there is no literary or archaeological evidence for a monastery in Antioch during this period (Jurgens 1970:77–78). The ascetic ideal was constantly impressed upon these young men by means of small meetings in houses where they gathered to pray and to research the scriptures. They strained to live a life as far as possible disconnected from the world in which they lived; their morals of practice demonstrate, in a Greek-speaking milieu, a life as "sons and daughters of the covenant". They obligated themselves to remain celibate, refrain from wine and meat, wear characteristic dress and dedicate themselves to prayer and eluding secular engagements, which were prohibited (Kelly 1995:20–22).

Chrysostom thus explored the principles of biblical interpretation under Diodore and Carterius. It was under the authority of Diodore, in what was called the Antiochene School of exegesis, that Chrysostom later in his life acquired a literal, as opposed to the allegorical, method of interpreting scripture.

Diodore's pupils must therefore have been a close group of companions who were devoted Christians, living in their own households, but who must have assumed self-imposed rules of strict frugality. For the purposes of this study it is then important to note that they must have resolved to relinquish marriage, sexual intercourse and ranges of other luxuries (Sterk 2009:143). Yet, the communal living of young men does raise some interesting questions with regards to homosociality and homoeroticism. One can only guess on the disposition and undercurrents of the association between these youthful men. Yet, when seen from the outside these men could have appeared no different from monks. Around the year 371 CE

Chrysostom was raised to the rank of a clerk in the church of Antioch (Kelly 1995:24).

Soon thereafter, Chrysostom and Basil got word that they were to be ordained as priests by the governing bishop Flavian (Meletius now being in exile) and they both determined to act in unison, either agreeing or refusing. Chrysostom however clandestinely decided to go in hiding. Basil, under objection, consented when confronted, but Chrysostom vanished. The people who nominated Chrysostom for his position and Basil were deeply disappointed and even infuriated. They saw his behaviour as an act of insolence, but Chrysostom endorsed it as an act of good intentions and the appropriate course for a Christian. He was faulted of being condescending and even of being vain to such an extent that even Basil's reputation was being tarnished (Kelly 1995:26; Rapp 2013:146).

In October 397 CE Chrysostom was approached by Asterius, the *comes oriens*, and told that by regal order he was ordained to become the bishop of Constantinople. In this way, Chrysostom became the twelfth bishop of Constantinople. The see of Constantinople was a very important position, and was only second to the seat of the Pope in Rome. In Constantinople, Chrysostom was in close proximity to the royal family (Kelly 1995:103–107).

Chrysostom's reign in Constantinople was thwarted by several conflicts of varying sorts. Chrysostom, as a result of several complex altercations, was for the first time exiled from Constantinople under armed guard in 401 CE. This, however, led to a ferocious outbreak of protest by the population of Constantinople. But it was not the outbreak of violence by the populace that caused the authorities to change their minds in recalling Chrysostom; it was the awe-inspiring earthquake that occurred on the night following Chrysostom's deportation that led to his recall (Kelly 1995:230–232).

But his time in Constantinople after his return was short. Chrysostom was finally exiled a second time from Constantinople on 20 June 404 CE. This time, however, public revolt against him being exiled was to no purpose (Kelly 1995:248–251). He died on 14 September 407 CE while in exile.

### 3.4.2 *Chrysostom and Women*

In a study of this nature, it is prudent to also give a short overview of Chrysostom's dealings with women. Now, in the time of Chrysostom the activities of the church and state became much more intertwined in Antioch (Mayer 2001:60). Liturgical practices developed rapidly, allowing for greater participation by clergy in community activities such as marriage, death and burial. Little is known about the seventeen years (380–397 CE) or so that Chrysostom spent as presbyter in this city. He rapidly became Flavian's favourite and all the more regularly started speaking, yet little is established about his other obligations (Mayer 2001:61). He further persuaded the Empress Eudoxia to provide material and personal support in order to cultivate the Nicene Christian community (Mayer 2001:62). He built and upheld hospitals and hospices and even a sanctuary for lepers. Chrysostom recruited affluent aristocratic men and women in service to the administration of his pastoral programmes.

Chrysostom was just as tactical when he established hymn singing at night to mobilise the Nicene Christians against the Arians. It is thought that Chrysostom's stance was negative towards women whilst he was still in Antioch, but this might have altered when he went to Constantinople. Here a number of women became close to him (Mayer 2001:64). These women were of the greatest significance to Chrysostom's welfare program. There is evidence that Chrysostom had close associations to some well-off ladies, already in Antioch. This attachment endured well into his period of exile (Mayer 2001:64). The two ladies he could be said to have the keenest associations to were, Olympias of Constantinople and Carteria of Antioch. These connections were however based on benefactorial dispositions towards assisting the church. However, the view that Chrysostom's relationship with women only improved in Constantinople was refuted, in detail, by Mayer (2014:211–226), who has shown that Chrysostom interacted with women in Antioch just as fervently as in Constantinople.

Towards the end of his life, Chrysostom was convicted at the Synod of the Oak for, among other things, entering the private homes of women without being escorted. This could signify that he either privately trained them or took confessions.

Technically women were to be taught by female deacons only. Yet it was well known that Chrysostom often entered the private abodes of Olympias to teach both her and other women of the senatorial class. No other man was allowed to function in this way (Mayer 2001:65–66). Chrysostom looked upon this as an ordinary responsibility of a bishop. He found nothing wrong in hearing the confessions of upper class women. Evidence also exists that Chrysostom continued his relationships with the aristocracy in Antioch whilst in Constantinople (Mayer 2001:66; 2014:211–220).

Those acquainted with Chrysostom know how he was denied the episcopal throne in Antioch. He was forced to go to Constantinople and he continued meddling with missionary work in Phoenicia even though the region was not under his jurisdiction (Mayer 2001:68). In a passage by Chrysostom he stated that women inclined to be among the more devoted members of his congregation but that some of these women, when becoming dissatisfied, became the main masterminds in the movement against him (Mayer 1999:273). This leads to the impression that in Constantinople, Chrysostom was exposed, socially and politically, to a far greater number of aristocratic and influential women. He even went so far as to tell the congregation (in his homilies) that these women would even physically assault him or spit at him when they spotted him in public.

Women who supported Chrysostom such as Olympias and Sylvania suffered great pecuniary loss at the hands of the Emperor Theodosius because of their adoption of the monastic life and lost most of their wealth (Mayer 1999:274). The fact remains however, that the kind of women Chrysostom related with and moved amongst were solely women of the senatorial class and the nobility (Mayer 1999:283). Chrysostom did not always preserve a good relationship with the Emperor's wife Eudoxia. She was known to have been spontaneous and had an inconsistent attitude towards Chrysostom (Mayer 1999:283–284). Yet, Eudoxia was the one who sheltered Chrysostom when he returned from his first period of exile. Chrysostom's association with Eudoxia, albeit defined as extremely unstable and tainted by later sources, is somewhat difficult to grasp—they seemed to have been in good standing up to a certain point (2006:205–213).

It was customary for clergymen and bishops to make use of prominent women to achieve political purposes in Constantinople during the late fourth century and, paradoxically, we even find women close to Chrysostom, like Olympias, hosting his enemies (Mayer 1999:284–285). According to Mayer (1999:287), Chrysostom became disliked among highborn men in Constantinople because of his capacity to get affluent women to apply their wealth to the advantage of the church. In a sense it seems inconsistent for the Chrysostom who so clearly defined the different roles of men and women in his sermons, to use women to come to the financial aid of the church and then be quite tolerant towards the role of women in his life.

Numerous women played an important role in Chrysostom's life, like his Christian mother Anthusa and Olympias. In several instances, he valued the input of women in his life (Clark 1979:57). This fact, however, did not change his opinion that women should only occupy a secondary position both in church and in society. He remained certain of the opinion that women were inferior to men in all aspects of life, except for one area: fidelity in marriage. He based his opinion on the fact that he kept believing that Eve was responsible for the original sin of humankind. Chrysostom believed that women were created from men and in the image of men (not God), as can be seen in his *Homily 14 on Genesis* (in Hill 1986:180–193).

### 3.4.3 *Chrysostom the Ascetic*

To further understand Chrysostom's views on sexuality, and how he interpreted Pauline sexual ethics, we need to understand Chrysostom's own preference for the ascetic lifestyle. In his early life in Antioch, there were two reasons why Chrysostom decided to depart the city and go live as a monk on Mount Silpios. Firstly, he felt that the tasks he had to do in the city were not sufficiently demanding and he was aware of his emerging sexuality which he had difficulty controlling (he might have had Matthew 5:29–30 and 18:9 in mind) (Kelly 1995:29). The second is seen in *On the Priesthood* 1, in which he confessed that he was still subject to very strong passions and that he forced himself to avoid the company of women to prevent himself from acting on his urges. On Mount Silpios, Chrysostom placed himself under the guardianship of an elderly Syrian, a master of asceticism. He lived the monastic life, struggling against the passions, for a period of four years (Kelly 1995:27–29; Stewart

2014:9). The ideal for the monastic communities on the mountain, whatever their routine was, was to maintain communion with God for as long as possible. They had to try and converse with God for periods as long as possible, and they continually had to pray for salvation.

Following these four years Chrysostom intensified his level of devotion even more. He went to live alone in a cave in the mountain, this for a period of two years. He slept the absolute minimum, and when he did, he only did so in a standing position. This was a common practice among hermits during this period. Archaeological evidence has been found of monasteries that had been built in ways to accommodate people who, like those of the Syrian-Orthodox Abbey of Qartmin, slept standing (Kelly 1995:32–34).

Here Chrysostom memorised large parts of both the Old and the New Testament. According to Kelly (1995:34) he believed that he was glorifying God, but when his health deteriorated to such a degree due to poor diet, lack of sleep and orthopaedic problems from not lying down, he recognised that he could not persist on this path and returned to the city. Chrysostom did not, as is often believed, return to the city because he was disillusioned with monastic life. This statement can be supported when reading Chrysostom's work *Against the Opponents of the Monasticism* 1 (in Hunter 1988:77–85). Chrysostom continued believing that monks lived the lives of angels. As Brown (1988:305–311) has noted, however, Chrysostom knew that he could not impose the rigorous ascetic routine, which he himself was barely able to fulfil, on his audience. Chrysostom therefore promulgated a moderate type of asceticism as part of his programme to bring the desert into the city. This is also, then, the context in which his sexual ethics must be understood. We will now turn to this topic.

### 3.5 THE APPROPRIATION OF PAULINE SEXUALITIES IN THE THOUGHT OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

It is important to remember that during the time that Chrysostom lived, there was in reality only one “gender”, the feminine; the masculine was seen as not being a gender but the general, according to Wittig (1983:64). Masculinity was something

that was earned and entailed self-control. The cultivation of self-control was, as we shall see, central in Chrysostom's understanding of masculinity and his appropriation of Pauline sexual morality. Not all men were allowed the status of being masculine. This implies that virtue was a masculine property, and maintaining virtuous behaviour would render a person masculine. This would make sense if one would take into account the theory of Butler (2006:173), where she states that certain acts or gestures of a person are performative and establishes a person's fabricated identity if sustained. For Chrysostom the more virtue a man displayed the more masculine he was (De Wet 2014a:227–230).

According to Chrysostom the ascetic ideal was by definition masculine (Leyerle 2001:131). Chrysostom was mainly concerned that social gender norms should be upheld and fears that men in so-called "spiritual marriage" (that is, unmarried couples co-habiting, which will be discussed below), for instance, might become "softer, more hot-headed, shameful, mindless, irascible, insolvent, importunate, ignoble, crude, servile, slavish and of no account" when they transgress traditional social boundaries (*Against Those Who Cohabit with Virgins* 2.53–54; in Clark 1979:166–167; see also Leyerle 2001:131). He feared that the women would "take all their corrupting feminine customs and stamp them onto the souls of men" (Leyerle 2010:135).

Another quality that was masculinised during the fourth century, especially by the church authorities, was patience or endurance (De Wet 2014a:230). Christian men, in the late fourth century, especially, were seen as soldiers of Christ, armed with the weapons of patience, endurance and self-control, always involved in a battle against demons or the devil who wanted them to be involved in heretical activity (De Wet 2014a:231). As we have already noted in chapter 1, Chrysostom often described Jews as soft or effeminate and followers of the heresies, like the Manichaeans, weak and easily seduced (*Commentary on Galatians* 1.4). But if a man really wanted to be a man in the eyes of Chrysostom, he had to be able to fight against fleshly passions or desires (Yagizi 2002:48–65). Chrysostom therefore saw the control of one's sexual appetites as a war, and in making sense of this war, he used Paul's advice on the matter and also transformed the advice to suit his own context and purpose.

In his *Baptismal Instructions 2* (see Harkins 1963:44–45, 213–214), Chrysostom strongly warned against the pitfalls of a life of excess, pride, and ease and how easily it could lead to going astray, proclaiming that a life of asceticism and celibacy is a strong counter balance for potentially committing sexual sin.

Let us look more closely at Chrysostom's appropriation of Pauline sexual morality. The focus will be on the origins of sex and sexual morality in Chrysostom's thought. Thereafter attention will be given, respectively to Chrysostom's use of Pauline ethics in terms of marriage (as an expression of heterosexual relations) and homoeroticism (as an expression of same-sex relations). But let us first consider the Pauline origins of sex in Chrysostom's thought.

### *3.5.1 Pauline Origins of Sex in Chrysostom's Thought*

An interesting fact is that the gospels do not teach that much about marriage, at least not in much detail; most of the details of early Christian thought on marriage are found in the writings of Paul, as we have seen. This means that Paul primarily provided guidelines on patristic teaching on marriage. From the little we know it seems that the attitude of Jesus towards women in the gospels is surprisingly positive (Matt. 5:27–32, 19:3–12; Mark 10:2–12). In Matthew 5:28, Jesus extended the adultery issue to such a measure that He included looking at another woman with lust as adultery, a point that became very relevant in Chrysostom's thought. By doing this, Jesus extended the traditional Jewish worldview and protected, in this way the dignity of all people (Heaney-Hunter 1999:82). Jesus prohibited divorce on the basis of preventing further adultery in Matthew 5:31–32, which He also explained in Matthew 19:4–9. In *Homily 17 on Matthew 1*, Chrysostom states: "For not at all to this end did God make you eyes, that you should thereby introduce adultery, but that, beholding His creatures, you should admire the Artificer".

Paul differed somewhat from Jesus with regards to women. For Paul, women were the image of the glory of men, whilst men were the image of God, and because of this reason, women had to cover their heads at church gatherings (1 Cor. 11:5–6). In spite of this obvious hierarchical placing of women in creation, men and women are, according to Paul, equally equipped to proclaim the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 11:4,13).

This ability of women even allowed them to assume leadership positions in church however, it went unrecognised by Chrysostom who only used 1 Corinthians 11:5–10 to assert the subordinate role of women (*Homily 34 on 1 Corinthians 4*). For Chrysostom, a woman should be aware of her place and keep quiet in a subordinate position next to her husband (Heaney-Hunter 1999:93).

It is of great importance to note that Chrysostom's views on the original sin are based on the Antiochene tradition. It adheres to Scriptural literalism and mostly discards allegory (Heaney-Hunter 1998:134). Chrysostom had a very literal view of the creation account and the lives of Adam and Eve in Paradise, and he relied especially on Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 11 when interpreting Genesis 1–3. According to Chrysostom, Adam and Eve lived blissfully in Paradise without any care (*Homily 16 on Genesis*; in Hill 1999:207–221). Not only did their disobedience in eating the fruit cause them to become mortal and experience pain, it also made them corruptible (*Homily 16 on Genesis 6–8*; in Hill 1999:210–211). Chrysostom, however, acknowledged God's mercy in making people mortal, therefore after death people would not be able to sin for all eternity (see more generally, *Homily 16 & 17 on Genesis*; in Hill 1999:207–246). In these latter homilies, Chrysostom explained that Eve, who was the first one to eat of the fruit, would suffer pain in childbirth, and part of her suffering would be that her husband would rule over her. Chrysostom thus related marriage, sex and childbirth directly to the aftereffects of sin in Genesis 1–3.

Chrysostom ends the sixteenth homily on Genesis by pointing to the new Adam that would by means of another kind of tree (this time a wooden cross) bring salvation (*Homily 16 on Genesis 20*; in Hill 1999:220–221). But, Chrysostom, in a homily discussing Romans 5:12–13, did not believe that the sins of Adam and Eve were conveyed to future generations, and he went so far as to affirm that if that would have been the case, people would not have been to blame for their transgressions (*Homily 10 on Romans 1*). This view is confirmed in Chrysostom's homily on John 9:1–2, where he explicitly stated that no child may be kept responsible for his or her father's sins (*Homily 56 on John 2–3*). But most importantly, for Chrysostom, then, although sex is the result of sin, sin is not transmitted through sex, like Augustine believed (Pagels 1985:67–99). What is important to note at this point, then, is that

Chrysostom actually reads Genesis 1–2 through the eyes of Paul, and especially in the context of 1 Corinthians 11.

It is important to note that only since Augustine, does the fall of Adam and Eve become disconnected from the larger picture of sin and redemption in the Old Testament, and therefore an isolated event. In the whole of the rest of the Old Testament, apart from Genesis 3, it is hardly mentioned. In the gospels also, there is no mention of the fall of Adam and Eve, and there is no reference of it connected to marriage. For instance Jesus, in John 8:44, pointed to the fact that it is Satan who is responsible for people acting sinfully (just like the wrong behaviour of Adam and Eve in Paradise), but Jesus did not blame sinful behaviour of people on an inherited factor of the forefathers as was upheld by later church tradition. John 9:1–3 is a clear example of the fact that Jesus viewed sin as something that could not be attributed to a person other than oneself. Along with 1 Corinthians 11, Romans 5:12–15 also shows Paul casting a whole new light on the origin and consequence of sin in the world. Adam, according to Paul, introduced sin and thus death into the world, but Jesus, the second Adam, came to bring salvation from death and sin (Daphna, Cousland & Neufeld 2010:130). Chrysostom relies, fundamentally, on this basic principle of Pauline theology and Christology, and believes that salvation from sin, including sexual sin, starts with the transformation of the *gnōmē*, or mind-set, as Laird (2012:25–52) calls it.

Chrysostom viewed sin as a type of slavery, which Paul himself affirmed in Romans 6:17–20 (De Wet 2015:51–64). A similar argument was forwarded by the Stoics, who emphasised the slavery to the passions. Paul in turn, sees salvation as slavery to God and freedom from sin (De Wet 2015:62–63). Chrysostom followed suit and was mostly concerned not with institutionally enslaved or free, but whether one was a slave to the devil or sin (and the passions of the flesh). For Chrysostom, sin caused both institutional and moral slavery, and an individual became either a slave to sin or to God (De Wet 2015:80). Slavery to God implied freedom from sin and passions (De Wet 2015:114).

Chrysostom pathologised passion by making it a quasi-medical condition. He converted it into a pathological condition of the soul (*On the Priesthood* 3.3–6; see

also De Wet 2013:42–44). Chrysostom went on to describe how one who became a slave to the passions also became physically sick, causing such a person to develop a weak mind. The slave-masters of those who became slaves of passions, that is, sin and the devil, are harsh and severe (De Wet 2015:125–128). Additionally, one may speculate whether Chrysostom may have thought of sexually transmitted diseases in this regard. From my own perspective as a medical doctor, this might, in modern medical terms, not be too farfetched because the third stage of syphilis which is called tertiary syphilis involves neurological impairment and is called general paralysis of the insane.

### 3.5.2 *Chrysostom on Marriage*

Slavery of sin resulted in another form of “slavery”, namely marriage. In Chrysostom’s *Sermon 4 on Genesis 1* (in Hill 2004:63) he states:

Now, it is necessary to explain today the great honor of another kind as well, which sin of its nature removed, and all forms of slavery it introduced, like a kind of usurper with a variety of shackles shackling our nature in its various roles of government. First, then, is the form of government and of slavery by which men have power also over women, there being a need of this after sin.

In this “sermon” on Genesis (which is part of a different corpus than his “homilies” on Genesis), Chrysostom again understands the events in Genesis 1–2 through the Pauline lens of sin as slavery (see Rom. 8:15–16). The rule of a man over a woman is one of three types of slavery Chrysostom notes in the *Sermon 4 on Genesis*, the other two being actual institutional slavery, and being under imperial governance and law. According to Chrysostom, as stated in his *On Virginity* 14.6 (in Shore 1983:22) marriage sprang from disobedience, from a curse, and even proliferates death (because of the cycle of procreation and death) - in this same section Chrysostom speaks of marriage in terms of enslavement. He is of the opinion that marriage and sex would not have existed had Adam and Eve not sinned in Paradise (and he makes it clear in *On Virginity* 14.6 that Adam and Eve were *not* “married” in Paradise). Sin resulted in sexual intercourse, which was, in turn, contaminated by concupiscence (Heaney-Hunter 1998:2).

Chrysostom was very much influenced in his views on marriage by the second creation account (Gen. 2:4–24) - but again, as informed by Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 11. In this account the divine intention of the uniting of the male and female is of great importance. Out of this account of creation Chrysostom also derived his notion that the male is a superior creature to the female. This, even though it was the main stream of thought from the fourth century onwards, was not supported by all Church Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria, as Clark (1979:4) points out, who was an earlier author and who focussed more on the union of husband and wife.

Chrysostom wrote extensively about marriage. His writings on marriage tend to often serve several purposes. He drew comparisons between the relationship between God and the church, used these comparisons as anti-Manichaean propaganda (where he used them to speak out against those who opposed marriage as something that was perceived as evil and of this world only; *Homily 20 on Ephesians* 1–3). When someone became baptised they entered into a heavenly marriage with God, as becomes clear throughout the arguments of the *Baptismal Instructions*. Although it was not the ideal, Chrysostom agreed with Paul's advice that it is better to marry than to burn with desire (*Homily 19 on 1 Corinthians* 3). But Chrysostom (*On Virginity* 19.1; in Shore 1983:27) also writes:

So marriage was granted for the sake of procreation, but an even greater reason was to quench the fiery passion of our nature. Paul attests to this when he says: "But to avoid immorality, every man should have his own wife" (1 Cor. 7:2). He does not say for the sake of procreation. Again, he asks us to engage in marriage not to father many children, but why? so "that Satan may not tempt you," (1 Cor. 7:5) he says. Later he does not say: if they desire children but "if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry" (1 Cor. 7:9). At the beginning, as I said, marriage had these two purposes but now, after the earth and sea and all the world has been inhabited, only one reason remains for it: the suppression of licentiousness and debauchery.

What is extremely important to note, from *On Virginity* 19.1 (Shore 1983:27–28), is that Chrysostom felt that procreation was no longer a reason for marriage (once again, similar to Paul, who departs from conventional Judaistic thought on the matter). Chrysostom acknowledges that Genesis 1–2 has an impetus for human beings to procreate, but this impetus has been fulfilled. So Chrysostom reads the Genesis narrative not only through the lens of 1 Corinthians 11, but also through 1 Corinthians 7 - and this becomes an argument in favour of celibacy against the slavery of marriage. Chrysostom appropriates Paul's sexual ethic in 1 Corinthians 7 on the basis that it promotes celibacy, one of the cornerstone virtues of the church. Celibacy was for the strong or the "manly", while marriage, albeit permissible, was reserved for the weak that lacked self-control.

For Chrysostom, marriage implied fidelity of both partners in marriage, but also fidelity towards God (Heaney-Hunter 1998:184–187). In his *Homily 18 on First Corinthians 2*, Chrysostom repeatedly reminds the reader that it is inappropriate for the believer to have intercourse with a harlot, since the body of the believer belongs to Christ whose Spirit occupied the body of the believer. He explained extensively why damage is done not only to the body of the believer but also shames the Spirit of Christ. He expressively emphasised Paul's words that "he that is joined to a harlot is one in body, but he that is joined to the Lord is one in Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:16).

Continuing in *Homily 19 on 1 Corinthians 1–3*, Chrysostom clearly stated that Paul made what he wrote applicable to all, and not only to the congregation of Corinth. Chrysostom was of the opinion that Paul stated that the wife became the slave of the husband and should she not pay her husband the dues owed to him she would offend God. Chrysostom did not state exactly the same about the husband but went on to affirm that both the husband and the wife should shun temptations, like having sex with prostitutes, because their bodies became the property of their spouses. Chrysostom then went on to warn, like Paul, against the dangers of withholding one another from the other without consent or good reason. Here we find that Chrysostom paid more attention to women (than Paul perhaps, at least, more explicitly than Paul), pointing out that they were often responsible for their husbands' fornication because they chose to cultivate sin rather than righteousness.

In Chrysostom's *On Virginity* 57 (Shore 1983:91–95) some strenuous expectations are placed on the female partner in marriage (in order to actually dissuade marriage). To list but a few, she had to master the violence of her passion. If she cannot do so, she should flatter her lord (husband). She had to submit herself to whatever her husband wished, be it that he struck her, or abused her, or even humiliated her in front of the household. She had to submit herself to this “slaver”, no matter what extent of self-control it required. For Chrysostom the marital bond remained permanent, no matter whether the partners were separated by choice or even by death (*Homily 62 on Mathew 2; Against Remarriage*; in Shore 1983:129–145).

In his writing *To a Young Widow* it becomes evident that the widowed partner should remain single and not marry again. This fact is important because it provides the theological basis consecrating chastity after the death of a spouse. In this, widowhood is made superior to a second marriage (see also Chrysostom's treatise *Against Remarriage* in Shore 1983:129–45). For Chrysostom, especially during the fourth century, those who got married were slightly inferior to those who chose practiced celibacy, as the virgins and celibate monks replaced the martyrs of the first two centuries (Heaney-Hunter 1998:242). Therefore Chrysostom strongly warned against a second marriage for women, and he could not understand why a woman would remarry after she had experienced the burdens of marriage before and did not make the same concession as Paul had made. Chrysostom's advice was to remain celibate (Clark 1979:246).

To summarise, Chrysostom believed that marriage was the result of the first sin. He did not see childbearing as the primary purpose of marriage and intercourse. For him, avoiding fornication was of much higher importance than to procreate (*Homily 19 on 1 Corinthians* 1–3). This is in line with Paul's thinking but against conventional Roman wisdom. Chrysostom allowed marriage as something that had to be accepted for curbing sexual lust. He was, however, of the opinion that the world was already overpopulated and no procreation was really necessary; so in Chrysostom's mind, marriage was only really necessary to contain the passions of those involved in the marriage (Brown 2008:307–308). For Chrysostom chastity and fidelity were of

utmost importance. Unlike some other early Christian authors, Chrysostom was of the opinion that fidelity was as important for the husband as for the wife (Fox 1987:356–57). Chrysostom was in agreement with Paul that husbands and wives should not withhold themselves from one another as this could lead to difficulty for one of the partners involved (*Homily 19 on 1 Corinthians 2*).

### 3.5.3 A Note on Chrysostom's Attack on "Spiritual Marriage"

A brief point should be made on Chrysostom's view on so-called "spiritual marriage" or *syneisaktism*, since it does illuminate some aspects of Chrysostom's sexual-ethical thought and understanding of gender. For Chrysostom, men who were slaves to their lust for women were men of the worst kind. He was particularly outspoken about men who were involved in "spiritual marriage" or *syneisaktism*, which was in general frowned upon during the fourth century (Clark 1977:171–185). Spiritual marriage, broadly, entailed a man and woman living together but not being married. They saw themselves as ascetics, but lived together for practical and logistical reasons (they were called *subintroductae*). De Wet (2017a:58–80) has recently argued that the arrangements among *subintroductae* may also be related to the fact that, upon entering the ascetic life, many of them gave away most or all of their slaves, thus illuminating the logistic and labour-related issues behind *syneisaktism*. Although Chrysostom believed it was for lust, he was repulsed by these arrangements, and wrote two works against these persons (see Clark 1979:158–247).

For Chrysostom, it was better to be a real institutional slave than to be a slave of the passions of whatever kind - but a freeborn man, and a monk no less, being a slave of a woman (*gynaikodoulos*), was particularly shameful. Being a slave of a woman meant being a slave of lust, and being a slave of one's passions for Chrysostom became an assault on one's manhood, making such one part of the weaker sex. It made the man servile and subordinate to women, thus overthrowing the natural implied hierarchy. In a sense these men became eunuchs. They became the emasculated slaves of the virgins they waited on and the gender ambiguity that resulted from this was the biggest problem for Chrysostom. It made these men to appear effeminate and slavish (Leyerle 2001:124–134). Such men were being

referred to as “eunuchs” specifically because eunuchs were looked upon with suspicion in Roman society as a result of their gender ambiguity. Because of their uncertain male role in society they (the monks who became involved in spiritual marriages) became a threat to the stability of Christian masculinity and to marriage.

Chrysostom’s invective against *syneisaktism* clearly shows how important the natural gender hierarchy was to him. In his view any form of desire that did not fit in with the view that was held by Paul, was wrong or influenced by the devil. Paul’s view with regards to the naturalness of passion is dramatically Jewish as was shown in the previous chapter, and Chrysostom clings strictly to this view. It becomes clear throughout this study how much veneration Chrysostom had for the thoughts of Paul. Chrysostom was very concerned with the “normal” sexual hierarchy and the maintenance of order, where the man is more important than the woman (with reminiscences of 1 Cor. 11). Same-sex relations too, as we will shortly see, became a threat to the normal order in society in both Paul’s and Chrysostom’s thought. This overthrow of normal hierarchical relations is the result of excess passion.

In terms of masculinity and sexual identity, for Chrysostom the most important thing is the crumbling of the socially constructed gender codes. Masculinity is in ancient times, as Gleason (1995:58–59) says: “an achieved state, radically undetermined by anatomical sex”. Here again physiognomy’s role in the determination of gender comes to the fore. Masculinity was an insidious process that involved far more than specifically sexual habits of preferences (Leyerle 2001:122) and Gleason states, in her *The Semiotics of Gender* (1990:391), that those “who tampered with the visible variable of masculinity... provoked vehement moral criticism because they were rightly suspected of undermining the symbolic language in which male privilege was written”. Chrysostom was scared of the public image that was created when a monk lived with a virgin (perhaps just as Paul was concerned about the man who lived with his stepmother in 1 Cor. 5:1). In antiquity it was no new thing to segregate that which was masculine from that which was feminine. In Chrysostom’s day the well-to-do women were expected to remain indoors, making Chrysostom assume that for the female Christian it should be easier to live a life of the pure Christian, since they were exposed to less temptations. Chrysostom stated that Christ wanted Christians

to be “stalwart soldiers and athletes, not the lackeys of women” (*Against Those Who Cohabit with Virgins* 10.72–73; in Clark 1979:194–195).

Thus, in sum, marriage was not the ideal for Chrysostom, but it was a safeguard against falling into fornication - but only legitimate marriage, and not *syneisaktism*, was considered permissible by the standards of Pauline sexual morality. This is also a good example of how fluid gender definition was seen in antiquity. It explains why Chrysostom attaches himself to the teachings of Paul to such an extent that it almost becomes a kind of Paulism. The way Chrysostom felt about holy marriage makes it even easier to see why he was even more outspoken against same-sex love where gender borders were completely transgressed. We now turn to the issue of same-sex passion in Chrysostom.

#### 3.5.4 *Chrysostom and the Problem of Same-Sex Passion*

In *Homily 3 on Romans 2*, Chrysostom discusses Romans 1:18. To him it was important once again that the ways of ungodliness are many, and one of them is for a man to leave his wife for another man (Chrysostom quotes 1 Thess. 4:6; with regards to Chrysostom’s views on female same-sex passion, see Brooten 1996:344–348). Then, while discussing Romans 1:19 Chrysostom notes that spending money on a harlot was one of the things that one could do that would cause the greatest harm to the kingdom of God. He therefore links homoerotic behaviour to other sexual sins, particularly prostitution (a similar ecology of vice found in Paul’s thought). Chrysostom was of the opinion that God did not send an audible voice from above to let people know Him, but instead used nature, in order that both the wise and not so wise would be able to “hear” God’s voice and through sight get to know Him. In spite of all God’s attempts, humanity, in its vainglory, chose not to heed to God but instead to worship idols made in the images of corruptible human beings. This led to God’s “leaving men alone” or “giving them up” (verse 24). Thus, along with prostitution, homoeroticism is also linked to idolatry. In Chrysostom’s terms, God gave men reason, and an understanding capable of perceiving what was needful, but men did not use what was necessary to gain salvation but chose perversion, resulting in dishonouring their own bodies through homoerotic behaviour.

Yet, his most vehement tirade against homoerotic practices is seen in *Homily 4 on Romans*. Commenting on Romans 1:26–27, Chrysostom explicitly stated that those who chose to exchange natural intercourse for the unnatural, had no excuse, because the natural alternative was available, and that the natural was perceived not unable to fulfil their desires. They were in fact being driven to monstrous insanity; Chrysostom again pathologised their behaviour (De Wet 2014:192–199). He clearly put that what is assumed to be natural up against what is not natural and stated that doing the unnatural could not lead to obtaining pleasure at all. The ways of these unnatural persons were, to Chrysostom, clearly satanic. In Chrysostom's opinion these persons were led by the hand of God but they refused it and ended up with living diabolical lives, unhappy and unfulfilled.

The homoerotic behaviour of women was just as inexcusable as that of men (Brooten 1996:345). Chrysostom clearly stated that lawlessness was the result of deserting of God. The sinful links of homoeroticism were thus triadic to Chrysostom - these links were akin to prostitution, idolatry and lawlessness. But homoeroticism was a problem of excess to Chrysostom (just as it was to Paul). He continued to state that luxuriousness kindled the flame of lust. People engaging in same-sex passion indulged in excessive luxury and lust (Harper 2013:161–167).

Should the question be asked why Chrysostom uses nature, the answer may be found in the fact that nature, as a normative discourse was a well-applied form of Roman rhetoric (Williams 2009:269–274). Chrysostom talked about a war where the devil turned Genesis 2:24 upside down and convinced people (men and women) no longer to want to be one flesh but to be unnaturally divided into two sexes. Chrysostom also mentioned that there was surely not a more grievous evil than these insolent dealings. He based this on Paul's statement: "Every sin that a man does is without the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:8). According to Chrysostom, for a man to have intercourse with a man is not only to betray one's nature, but to lose one's identity (that is, masculinity) - such a person is neither a man nor a woman. It corresponded to both mutilating one's identity and one's body.

Chrysostom harboured a great revulsion for people in homoerotic relations (Boswell 2009:347). Such persons were often compared to people who were diseased, just like murderers, rapists, and heretics (*Homily 4 on Romans 2*; see also De Wet 2014:188). He placed significant emphasis on the femininity of these men and in the strongly masculinised Roman world this was a measure of humiliation of these men. Chrysostom made no distinction between pederasty, male prostitution, men who just behaved effeminately, and men involved in same-sex relations - homoeroticism thus became a totalising discourse in Chrysostom's thought.

Despite Chrysostom's aversion to marriage (as a form of slavery and a result of sin), what now becomes interesting, is that any sexual activity outside of marriage becomes adultery, whether it is that between two men, two women or a man and a woman. For him, all distinctions between the penetrator and the penetrated disappear, and all social status differences between the two sexual partners disappear (*Homily 34 on 1 Corinthians 3–4*). The active-passive framework of the teratogenic grid is not accepted by Chrysostom, as he explains (*Homily on 1 Cor. 7:2, "For Fear of Fornication" 4*; in De Wet 2015:234): "For it is surely not only from the ones who are being violated, but also from the ones who violate, that the accusation of adultery is contracted." De Wet (2015:234) explains this point well: "In this statement Chrysostom makes both the active (*tōn hybrizontōn*) and the passive (*tōn hybrizomenōn*) party culpable for adultery and sexual dishonor - teratogenicity is no longer based on active or passive sexual activity". Chrysostom defined gender difference only within the limit of marriage (De Wet 2014:198). Thus, same-sex relations, in Chrysostom's view were responsible for making marriage obsolete. In his *Homily 2 on Titus 1* (commenting on Tit. 1:5–6) Chrysostom clearly stated that he was of the opinion that abnormal and unnatural sexual relations outside of marriage were the labours of the devil. Therefore, such persons were particularly akin to heretics and because of that they were prone to insanity and destruction of both themselves and others around them. Like the Manichees, who had a very negative view of the flesh, persons engaged in same-sex passion also mutilate their bodies.

In short, for Chrysostom, homoeroticism was unnatural, because it went against the (social) order determined by God and affirmed in Pauline scripture. It amplified lustfulness in excess, and it overturned normal sexual behaviour and hierarchy,

thereby creating gender ambiguity, which could only have been from the devil. And it deserved the worst kind of punishment, namely death, because it became the monster that threatened the well-being of the accepted norms of society, namely celibacy and marriage.

Same-sex passion was mainly an issue of excessive lust. The only way to overcome it was to be taught self-control and moderation (*sōphrosynē*). This teaching starts with changing one's day-to-day habits. In his work *On Vainglory and the Education of Children*, Chrysostom gives advice on how to raise young boys to be chaste (see the translation in Laistner 1951:85–122). In *On Vainglory and the Education of Children* 60 (Laistner 1951:104–105), Chrysostom states that a freeborn male can be discerned from a slave in the sense that he occupied different spaces, associated with different people, takes proper care of himself and utters proper language. By this, Chrysostom strongly implied that the freeborn male should avoid the theatre and not come close to slave girls. Young freeborn males should be serious and taken up with religious fervour (Laistner 1951:90–92). These things could only lead to austerity and the ability to control oneself, and thus act as a safeguard for a youth against effeminate and homoerotic tendencies (De Wet 2015:170–171). For Chrysostom, sexual lust had a spiritual place of origin. It was related to a corrupt will (Laird 2012:85–90). Sexual lust is not located in the genitals - thus, even eunuchs were able to have lustful thoughts (De Wet 2015:300). For Chrysostom, the honour lay in choosing to be spiritually castrated and not to be sexually active at all (*Homily 62 on Matthew* 3). Here we see, then, a development of Paul's ideal of celibacy into the notion of spiritual castration.

Furthermore, Chrysostom was convinced that children should not be inundated by luxury and wealth as this could only lead to effeminate sons (*On Vainglory and the Education of Children* 16–17; Laistner 1951:95–97; see also De Wet 2015:146–147). Also, the custom of the time was that young boys, often at birth received the *bullae* (an amulet for freeborn persons) and the *toga praetexta* to protect them not only from supernatural forces but also from pederasty. These tokens were still in use during the time of Chrysostom. But Chrysostom also objected to this in addition to boys wearing earrings and smart clothing in fear that it might make them soft or effeminate (De Wet 2015:232). Friedman (2001:34) states that the body of the

Roman citizen was private property and allowed to be penetrated but the penis of the Roman citizen was in the service of the Roman Empire. Chrysostom changed the rules of the game - it was no longer about penetrating or being penetrated, but about chastity. Chrysostom therefore tried to find a mean between exposure of young boys to homoerotic risks, but at the same time argued against excessive adornment as a sign of freeborn status and thus, impenetrability. It was a difficult balance to strike.

Moreover, in the time Chrysostom lived, same-sex passion between young boys and men could not be said to have always been involuntary. To guard against such homoerotic adolescent dangers, Chrysostom advised that a boy enter into the care of a monk or monastery at about the age of fourteen or even earlier. If it was not an option, a boy had to marry early (De Wet 2015:127–136). Chrysostom's answer was thus, that boys be either prepared for marriage at an early age or prepared for a life of monasticism. These moves would both teach the child self-control and hopefully lessen the risks of homoerotic behaviour (not accounting for the real possibility of a young boy being sexually molested by a monk).

Self-control was supposed to be a way of life, and Chrysostom was one of its greatest spokespersons. In *Homily 17 on 1 Corinthians 1–2*, Chrysostom discussed the importance of self-control, not only over gluttony, where he justified his views that food is for the belly and the belly for food (1 Cor. 6:12–13) but also of the importance of self-control over any form of desire. It should be remembered here that Chrysostom, like most ancient authors, believed that gluttony resulted in excessive sexual lust (Shaw 1998:131–138). Excessive eating can lead to excessive desire, which may be enacted in homoerotic deeds. Once one lost control over any form of any kind of desire, that desire would devour you, no matter what kind of desire you entertained, because desire would control your sense of judgement. In this way homoeroticism fitted into the whole “ecology” of vice. Again, Chrysostom in agreement with Paul pathologised “abnormal” desire - whether for food or sex - as an abnormal state of mind which would lead to fornication. This lapse also had effect on the afterlife. Chrysostom reminded the reader that the conjoined of Christ were destined for resurrection but the one who gave him/herself up to desire was destined for nothingness (*Homily 17 on 1 Corinthians 3*).

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

During the fourth century Chrysostom viewed Paul as a discursive construct and used Paul as a strategy in the formation of orthodox Christian identity and to refute heresy (De Wet 2014b:304). Understanding the way Chrysostom uses Paul to construct orthodox Christianity gives insight into Chrysostom's own self-fashioning (De Wet 2014b:304). It helps in understanding Chrysostom's "Paulism". To quote De Wet: "Christians could become more like Christ by becoming more like Paul" (De Wet 2014b:305). Chrysostom used Paul as foundational layer of the church and built on it to enhance the importance of the unity of the church, not giving way to heretics in his exegesis. He transferred the spotlight from Paul to the larger functioning of the community. But, Paul was still seen as the visionary who was called by God. Thus, by imitating Paul everyone became connected to God and was reminded of their obligation to remain connected to the Divine. This was true not only on the general level of Christian identity formation, but also in the construction of Chrysostom's sexual ethic. The imitation of Paul was expected to take place not only in mimicking his character, but also following his words with regards to sexual morality. When Chrysostom talks sex, he makes Paul speak for himself.

For Chrysostom, Paul was an indispensable source and standard in understanding the origins of sex and marriage (in relation to sin), the correct standards of heterosexual relations (within marriage), and in the condemnation of homoerotic behaviour and same-sex passion. The most basic aspects of sin and human relations, from the Genesis narrative, Chrysostom read through the lens of Paul's arguments in 1 Corinthians 7 and 1 Corinthians 11. Paul's preference for celibacy was the foundation for Chrysostom's argument that marriage (and, in effect, procreation) came a far second to the monastic life (and that spiritual marriage was taboo). In essence, the words of Paul became the building blocks of late ancient Christian sexual morality as exemplified in Chrysostom's works.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **APPROPRIATING AND MISAPPROPRIATING EARLY CHRISTIAN SEXUAL MORALITIES IN MODERN TIMES**

##### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

From the preliminary findings of this study, in general, it may be concluded that the early Christian condemnation of sexual immorality was part of a larger rhetorical strategy. There existed a preference for arguments from reason and emotion and nature in addition to biblical citation, and this was not only because of the obliqueness of the biblical texts, but also because Christian writers sought to persuade their audiences by appealing to existing perceptions of right and wrong. They used the attitudes and the code of sexual self-restraint already encouraged in the centuries before late antiquity and so associated them with what they considered the best of the Roman heritage. This corresponded well to Paul's intention to put his philosophy in a better light than that of the Romans when he wrote his Letter to the Romans, trying to convince them to rather accept his philosophy (Swancutt 2003:231). It enabled Christian writers to initiate a larger critique against non-Christian culture through their discussions of sexual morality.

Christian writers found it easy to dismiss the classical foundations of late ancient culture because they had at their disposal an alternative cultural tradition in the biblical heritage, even if they did not use this tradition on its own to create a sexual code. Christians also used this new sexual code to denounce the sexual activity of the other gods in the myths of non-Christian religions. Most Christian writers of late antiquity were educated in classical texts and even imitated their style, but they were ambivalent about the sinful content of these classical texts. By doing this, Christians could forge a new masculine identity removed from the sexual behaviour of the ancients. The heritage of pagan sexual transgressions became, for Christian writers,

a tool to create a symbol for a total cultural transformation. These are some of the first steps that would give rise, centuries later, to what we know as heterosexism.

Paul, however, as a product of his culture, shared some of the assumptions of the philosophers of his time. He describes same-sex passion in Romans 1 as inordinate passion, which might imply heterosexual desire as a positive counterpart for perverted homosexual desire (Loader 2010:9). But desire in Paul's thought is overall dangerous. For Paul desire is characteristic of gentile religion and morality, and must rather be avoided by Christians. When Paul gives advice in 1 Corinthians 7 he states that people should get married if they were too weak to control themselves, so that they may have an arena for the proper expression of sexual desire. Desire in Paul is a problem to be solved, a fire that should be extinguished - ironically, by having more sex. Martin (2006:65–76) has noted that this was one of two main views on the control of desire. Some, like Paul, believed that sex lessens desire, while others, especially in the Peripatetic and medical traditions, believed that desire cannot be extinguished, and having sex simply adds fuel to the fire (rather than extinguishing it). To Paul sex is thus not so much the problem as desire, and his solution is a specific philosophical choice. In this regard, Chrysostom departs from Paul again - he agrees that passion is a problem, but Chrysostom relies more on ancient Roman medical views that sex overall is bad. Thus, Chrysostom's advice to curb excess desire is not to have sex, but to eat foods that do not heat up the body (Shaw 1998:131–138). Unlike Paul, for Chrysostom sex is the problem, and not desire (De Wet 2014a:217–218).

Same-sex passion to Paul is simply a further extremity of perversion inherited in sexual passion itself. It originates simply from desire itself (Martin 2006:59). In Romans 1 Paul is also considering the male-female hierarchy and also takes into account the unnatural disruption of gender hierarchy. To quote Martin (2006:60): "Romans 1 offers no aetiology of homosexual desire or orientation; its aetiology of homosexual sex is one no modern scholar has advocated as factual; and its assumptions about nature and sex are not those generally held by the modern apologists for heterosexism". Martin is of the opinion that contemporary scholars read Paul through the lenses of modern categories and assumptions, while often ignoring the logic of Paul's own account and context.

Heterosexist scholars, he goes on to state (Martin 2006:60), accuse their foes of seeing in the text only what they want to see, due to their own biased predispositions. It is imperative to note that the form modern heterosexism takes, differs significantly from Paul's heterosexual passion. In Chrysostom's appropriation of Pauline sexual morality, we see how the bulk of Paul's thought was copied, but also transformed with seemingly minor changes, such as an extra emphasis on Paul's positive statements on celibacy and his warnings against marriage. It was facile for Chrysostom to amplify Paul's negative view of same-sex passion, because he had already overstated Paul's views on celibacy (which was not only in line with the mainstream orthodox doctrine, but also related to Chrysostom's Syrian Christian background, which had a preference for ascetic expressions of the Christian faith).

Specifically, the modern form of homophobia has motivated many heterosexist interpretations - but homophobia has a history. As we however, have seen in this study, it is a complex and variegated history. But the main premise entailed implanting same-sex desire into the body of the universal, fallen nature. I have attempted to suggest above, in line with Martin's views, that in modern times the heterosexist aetiology of homosexuality cannot be taken as relevant because it would be anachronistic. Romans 1 should not be seen as a growing field for heterosexist control of sexual normativity. The views of Chrysostom mirror that of Paul in some cases, while it expands and transforms them in others, and still in some cases, Chrysostom also departs from Paul's views. The historical development leading up to heterosexism is thus not one neat and consistent line of development or teleology.

In this chapter, I would like to contextualise some of the findings thus far in our own modern context. In the previous chapters attention was given to Pauline sexual morality and Chrysostom's appropriation thereof, especially with regards to marriage, procreation and same-sex passion. These three concepts I would now like to contextualise more specifically by looking at seemingly similar concepts, stereotypes and beliefs prevalent today.

## 4.2 MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE IN MODERN-DAY CHRISTIAN PURVIEW

Ironically, in spite of both Paul and Chrysostom's stances on both marriage and celibacy, the importance of family and family structure in modern-day Christianity has become fundamental to normative Christian sexual ethics (Fishburn 1991:107). Martin (2006:103) states that especially American churches express the point of view that the family with its *mores* upholds the most basic and intrinsic values of what can be found in Christian scripture. This point of view not only alienates gay and lesbian people from church congregations but also others who do not identify with the model of the married nucleus family. Although many modern Christians assume that the importance of the married nuclear family (that is, a husband, wife and children) has been upheld since early Christianity (and even before, in the Hebrew Bible tradition), this concept is in fact merely about a hundred and fifty years old (Martin 2006:104).

Divorce is just as contentious a topic as is marriage in modern times. However, it would seem that in modern society, especially Christian society, divorce has come to be accepted as something that is regrettable yet unavoidable (Coleman 1988:5). A very peculiar idea is that of "scriptural" and "unscriptural" divorce (Keener 1991:ix–xii). In this instance, scriptural justification for divorce is attempted to be found within the boundaries of Christian church. Again, reference is made to scripture in order to justify actions and in some instances also to settle guilt, but also inflict feelings of guilt.

This reference to scripture usually takes place in a two-step model. Step one involves trying to ascertain textual meaning from the ancient context of texts. After this step, unfortunately, follows the step where the meaning of what the text supposedly would have meant in its ancient context is taken to what it should supposedly mean in a modern context (Jeanrond 1988:6, 75). This method implicitly implies, firstly, exegesis and then application (therefore historical criticism is applied). The problem with this approach is, as Martin (2006:127) has shown, that it becomes very imaginative and often the imaginative becomes influenced by that which one wants to apply. A further problem with this approach is that of which time period in the scriptures should be seen as most authoritative on the subject (Old Testament or

New Testament, for instance); or the question arises of which time period should be used for reference. Should the scriptures involving the sayings of Jesus, or those involving the opinions of Paul or later letters such as the Deutero-Pauline epistles be used, or perhaps the Old Testament texts? The matter becomes extremely complicated, because there is not one consistent message on the topic.

#### 4.2.1 *Jesus on Marriage and Divorce*

Jesus' teachings on sexual morality fall outside the scope of this study, but for comparative and contextualising purposes, I provide here a brief sketch of Jesus' views on marriage. If the historical Jesus is taken into account it becomes clear that He did not have in mind the ideal of a married nuclear family. He stated in Mark 3:32: "Who is my mother and who are my brothers? ... Whoever does the will of God, that one is my brother and sister and mother". Jesus attached Himself to His eschatological family, who included those who shared His vision. He dwelled among people who were mostly unrelated by blood. Although Jesus taught that one should honour one's father and mother, He advocated leaving one's family in order to be in the service of God (Luke 14:26). Jesus all but valued family ties. This is also confirmed in the *Gospel of Thomas* 55 (in Meyer 1992:43) which reads: "Whoever does not hate his father and mother cannot be a follower of me" (see also Martin 2006:105). Manson (1957:131) confirms that the Lukan tradition carries much more weight in this matter than that of Matthew and should be seen as a more reliable source, should the gospels be compared to make historical deductions on this matter.

Jesus' opinion on divorce becomes clear in both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In Matthew 5:32 Jesus uttered an opinion on divorce but He also did so in Luke 16:18. Another opinion becomes clear in the Gospel of Mark 10:11–12. This opinion closely interconnects with the words in Matthew 19:9. The general conclusion that may be made is that Jesus' opinion was that if one divorced for any reason other than *porneia* one became guilty of adultery. Even more so, one should remarry. This rule applied to both men and women who remarried. Martin states (2006:129) that the version portrayed in the Gospel of Luke, is most supported by Q, which may mean that the addition, "except for fornication", is a later Matthean addition, because

he wanted to bring Jesus in line with the Torah. Thus, if one disregards the possible addition, one is prohibited from divorce overall. This would again support Jesus' stance against marriage, since it becomes such a binding relationship that, as the disciples also answer, "it is better not to marry at all" (Matt. 19:10). Contrary to popular belief, during the time Jesus lived, divorce happened, and it was not rare, and women could and did initiate divorce (even Jewish women). Should Jesus have completely prohibited divorce, He would have acted directly against what was happening in Palestine during the time He lived (Meier 2003:52–79), which makes his statements all the more interesting - and radical.

Thus, when looking at Luke 20:30 it may be deduced that Jesus could have regarded marriage as a matter of lesser importance. He stated that: "For they (those who have been resurrected) are no longer able to die, for they are all equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection". Both ancient Jews and Christians regarded angels as completely androgenic, therefore male. Reproduction for those who had been resurrected was of no importance at all. During ancient times, in general, marriage was committed primarily for the purpose of creating heirs, therefore implying procreation. This has already been explained to be important in the philosophy of almost all ancient cultures. Therefore in the life of the resurrected, where reproduction became an obsolete issue, marriage by implication also became obsolete. Jesus, like Paul after Him, did not see marriage as important; in Jesus' eschatological worldview He attached little value to this issue. The eternal kingdom of God was of far greater importance to Christ than marriage (Martin 2006:105–106).

#### *4.2.2 Paul on Marriage and Divorce*

According to the findings of this dissertation, Paul was no great advocate of marriage. Ideally he would have preferred all Christians to be like himself - celibate. This was also due to his imminent eschatological worldview. Desire was a problem to be solved, as was also discussed earlier. He did however realise that all Christians could not be like him or were able to exert his amount of control over desire, and for this reason only he contended that Christians could get married. This compromise was only made in order that Christians could restrain or curb their desires. According to Martin (2006:111) Paul never believed that marriage was the

perfect place to express sexual desire, but only the perfect way to avoid sexual desire. According to Paul, Christians could only use marriage to preclude sexual desire in order for them not to “burn with desire” (1 Cor. 7:9). As stated, in 1 Thessalonians 4:4 Paul advised the men to manage their “vessels” (women) in holiness and never in passion.

In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul succeeded in establishing a hierarchy within the family. This needed to be done in the context of the ancient world, which functioned according to a cosmic hierarchy that should also be in place in society. The Deutero-Pauline tradition only confirmed and enforced the patriarchal family pattern onto the Christian family. First it placed the husband, then the wife, then the children and lastly the slaves. Paul’s and Deutero-Paul’s were not the only ancient philosophers to enforce this hierarchical order. This order was dictated by many ancient philosophical schools. If 1 Corinthians 5:25–27 is taken into account, the accepted ancient view becomes apparent. The male is depicted as superior to the female in all instances. To the male are attributed characteristics like cleanliness, blamelessness, holiness, and glory. To the female characteristics like filthiness, profanity, guilt and a stained character are attributed. The male is depicted as the only giver, the only active participant, whilst the woman becomes completely passive and receptive. When gender characteristics and roles are viewed in context, Paul stays within boundaries already set up before his lifetime (see also 1 Cor. 5:33). Need modern Christians really uphold this polarised gender hierarchy, or is it possible to move beyond the ancient times?

If 1 Corinthians 7:10–11 is taken into account it seems that Paul agreed with Jesus’ viewpoint with regards to divorce. Paul might have added the clause that a woman should remain unmarried because of his view that being single was superior to being involved in marriage. The only exemption granted was when one was not able to control one’s desires.

Paul only accepted marriage after divorce in the case of the reuniting of a divorced husband and wife after reconciliation (1 Cor. 7:11). He also advised widows not to get married after becoming widowed, unless they were not able to control their

desires (1 Cor. 7:39–40). Paul’s allowance for persons to remarry is one of the more downplayed matters in Chrysostom’s appropriations of Pauline thought.

#### 4.2.3 *The Fourth-Century Church Fathers and Marriage and Divorce*

The late fourth-century Church Father Jerome was quite outspoken against marriage. He was one of the main opponents of Jovinian, who was labelled a heretic because he considered the married life on par with virginity (see, overall, Hunter 2007). In response to the Jovinianist controversy, Jerome even went so far as to rank virginity as the highest virtue one might possess. This was followed by widowhood. Marriage was ranked as the lowest position (see *Against Jovinian* 1). Jerome encouraged people to avoid sex even when married and only allowed it in order to procreate (*Against Jovinian* 1.20). He maintained that one honoured one’s wife when one abstained from having sex with her (*Against Jovinian* 1.7). At the time, Jerome’s views were representative of what we might call mainstream or orthodox Christianity - Jovinian’s views were most certainly not popular.

Augustine, however, who changed his opinion on sex and marriage many a time during his lifetime, finally came to the conclusion that sex and marriage were good. He even went as far as to contend that under the correct circumstances sex during marriage might be a good thing, but then again only in order to procreate (*On the Good of Marriage* 9). However, virginity and celibacy were still the prime virtues. What Augustine aimed to do was to show that marriage, and especially sex and procreation, were not sinful (as was stated by the Manichees, of whom Augustine was part for a certain period of his life). As a response against the “excesses” of Manichean views against the body, marriage did become somewhat rehabilitated, although the orthodox view was never that marriage was sinful (BeDuhn 2000:20–30). Even Chrysostom is careful to say that marriage is a sin - virginity was only better. In his own diatribe, Chrysostom argues (*On Virginity* 9.1; in Shore 1983:12): “You will say, ‘Do you not forbid it (marriage)?’ - Nonsense! May I never rave as you do .... I do not count marriage among evil things, rather I praise it exceedingly .... I advise not to marry but I do not forbid it.” The church upheld this more positive and rehabilitated view of marriage up to the age of the Reformation (Martin 2006:118).

The early church equally frowned upon divorce. If one chose the path of marriage, it was a binding commitment. Chrysostom (*Homily 62 on Matthew 1*) states:

Like then as to sever flesh is a horrible thing, so also to divorce a wife is unlawful. And He stayed not at this, but brought in God also by saying, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder”, showing that the act was both against nature, and against law; against nature, because one flesh is dissevered; against law, because that when God has joined and commanded it not to be divided, you conspire to do this.

Quite startlingly, Chrysostom practically uses the same arguments he used to denounce same-sex passion, namely nature and the law of God, to denounce divorce. As with Jesus, the strong opinion of the early church against divorce may have also served the purpose of dissuading people to marry altogether. This is supported by a similarly vehement denouncement of remarriage in the early church (Ford 1995:182–183).

#### *4.2.4 Preliminary Conclusion*

The idealisation of marriage (and quasi-pathologisation of divorce) by the modern church is therefore a phenomenon that is somewhat counter to that which was upheld by Christ, Paul, the early Christian church and most of the early Church Fathers. Oppenheimer (1990:87, 110) is of the opinion that the churches in modern times use marriage as a way of regulating people. Marriage is used as a tool to legitimise certain kinds of social bonding whilst excluding and illegitimising others. All kinds of bonds not accepted by the church such as those other than “holy” matrimony, are made out to be inferior or bad. As an example one may think of the shame attached to children (and parents of children) who are born outside of matrimony in many church societies even today (or the pressure older unmarried persons and childless couples often experience).

Whatever motives are used to justify the modern church’s stance on marriage, divorce or remarriage, especially as this stance is based on historical criticism, it is

always important to remember that historical criticism has become flawed with bias. Often it only becomes a way to a means. It is used to give ethical answers to many questions asked about many texts (Martin 2006:141). It is often driven by the bias and intent of the historian whose own worldview can often not be separated from the context of the original text that is studied. D'Angelo (1990:78–106) has clearly proven that the Bible should not be treated as a rule book unaffected by the historical context upheld by modern-day Christians. One should therefore be very careful in trying to find justification for answers to ethical questions or justification from ancient texts which were meant to convey a message to a receiver living in a different time, in very different situations.

### 4.3 HOMOSEXUALITY AND HETEROSEXUALITY

At the beginning of this study, in chapter 1, it was noted that ancient views of same-sex passion differed from modern-day notions of sexual orientation. When the term “homosexuality” is used in ancient contexts, it should be done with caution so as not to be anachronistic. It is, as stated, in chapter 1, important to take serious note of the fact that the construction of identity applies frameworks and findings from many different fields such as history, geography, society, and biology. Societies often reorganise the meaning they attribute to social determinations and cultural projects. Castells (2010:7) makes it clear that a person’s identity is often the product of meaning attributed by societal norms as if society becomes a person standing outside of the relevant society.

#### 4.3.1 *The Problems of Terminology*

It has been shown in this study that same-sex passion in Paul and in Chrysostom was unnatural not in its quality, but quantity. Ancient terminologies used for same-sex passion are complex to say the least. The Greek word *arsenokoitēs* (in its simplest and most literal sense, meaning “lying with men”) is a good example to illustrate the complexities of ancient terminology. Only since the middle of the twentieth century has this word been translated by terms like “sexual pervert” (Revised Standard Version 1946) or terms like “homosexual”; these translations came into common use at the time. Some translations go so far as to connect the

terms *arsenokoitēs* and *malakos*, and connect these terms and come up with terms like “homosexual offender” (Good News Bible 1966; New English Bible 1970). In some instances scholars refer to the *malakos* as the passive penetrated and the *arsenokoitēs* as the active penetrator, thus combining both partners under the blanket accusation of sexual perversion (Becker 1987:51). Yet the term has no sense of sexual orientation.

Some scholars attempt to “separate sin from the sinner” by using the translation “practicing homosexual” (for instance Boswell in his 1980 edition of *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*). Initially during the earlier (fourteenth-century translations), these acts were taken only to include acts by men, but during the late nineteenth century progressing into the twentieth century the words and acts were transformed to include sexual acts performed by women, or to put it differently, sexual acts by both sexes (Martin 2006:39). This shift (or misappropriation) has mostly been propagated by modern sexual ideology. Martin (2006:43) states that no clear meaning can be ascribed to the word *arsenokoitēs* and that it might only imply sexual exploitation of one person of another, and that it does not necessarily imply a “homosexual” sexual act.

The term *malakos*, however, has perhaps a clearer meaning in spite of many ideologically inspired mistranslations. During the sixteenth century, it was translated to imply a general weakness in character (Tyndale 1534; Cranmer 1539). However, at the end of the sixteenth century the word “effeminate” has come into preference (Martin 2006:44). The twentieth century has gone much further and introduced the word “sodomite” or even “male prostitute” (New International Version 1973; New Revised Standard Version 1989). Again, as in the case of *arsenokoitēs*, no historical evidence for this translation exists. The translation is driven by sexual ideology (Martin 2006:44). When referred to as something in the moral sense, it is quite easy to know the meaning of the word *malakos* from a historical perspective.

In moral perspective the word “soft” implied an amount of degeneracy, laziness, lack of courage or inhibition. In ancient times these characteristics were all ascribed to women as was shown through the course of this study. Womanliness implied vulnerability, tenderness, fearfulness and a willingness to submit. *Malakos*, however,

did not imply only a man that was penetrated by a man or men; he could also have been penetrated by a woman (see for instance the case of fellatio). The word for men who allowed themselves to be penetrated by men was *kinaidos*. *Malakos*, in fact, implied rather the whole complex of softness or then the less manly. *Malokos* did not explicitly imply the sexual act of being penetrated as is generally accepted; this is the reason why physiognomy, as mentioned earlier, was of great importance to the ancients (Fee 1987:243–244; Martin 2006:42–46). In Chrysostom’s appropriation of Pauline sexuality, we also witness some pervasive shifts, whether in emphasis or outlook, without digressing too far from Paul’s words. But similar pervasive shifts seem to be present in the history of translation of sexually loaded terms.

How do these findings relate to modern-day definitions and categories of sexual orientation (which, in themselves, are not unproblematic either). Homosexuality and heterosexuality as modern concepts have been defined by the Academy of Science of South Africa in May 2015 as (ASSAf 2015:18):

- *Biological sex:*  
Is defined by primary and secondary sexual characteristics identified at birth. Sex refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.
- *Sexuality:*  
Refers to a human’s capacity for sexual feelings and includes sexual orientation, sexual identity, social gender roles and sexual activity. Sexuality is an integral part of all humans, a basic need, and an aspect of being human. It includes eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.
- *Gender:*  
Refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women, “male” and “female” are thus sex categories, while “masculine” and “feminine” are thus gender categories.

- *Sexual orientation:*

Is about attraction and is demarcated mostly by the sex of those to whom one is attracted. The focus is the biological sex of a person's actual or potential relationship partners - this can be people of the same sex as the individual, or of the other sex or either sex. This attraction can be felt as romantic, sexual, affectionate or as a combination.

- *Sexual behaviour:*

This refers to participation in sexual acts that might or might not be related to sexual orientation or to be normative for a particular gender. For instance, persons in same-sex physical locations like single-sex hostels might participate in a same-sex sexual act, but may not consider this having any impact on their heterosexual orientation.

The following definitions are supplied by the European Society of Sexual Medicine Syllabus of Sexual Medicine 2012 (ASSAf 2015:19):

- *Heterosexuality:*

Preferential sexual attraction to people of the other biological sex.

- *Homosexuality:*

Preferential sexual attraction to people of the same biological sex.

- *Bisexuality:*

Preferential sexual attraction to people of both biological sexes.

There is an accelerating recognition of the wide range of natural variation in human sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity formation. There has accordingly been an associated expansion of the rights of homosexual, bisexual and transgender persons. Unfortunately, the rights of some have been taken away, for some unbelievable reasons, taking into account the remarkable amount of research in many fields to de-pathologise human sexuality in recent years, as will be shown

(ASSAf 2015:23). This was partly in response to the World Health Organization who declared during 1990 (ASSAf 2015:17) that homo- and bisexuality was no longer to be seen as a disease as was believed well into the twentieth century. During May 2014 the African Commission (“Resolution on Protection against Violence and Other Human Rights Violations against Persons on the Basis of Their Real or Imputed Sexual Orientation or Gender” in ASSAf 2015:23) for all African states to ensure that human environment is free of stigma, reprisals or criminal prosecution as a result of their human rights of sexual minorities and urged to end all acts of violence and abuse of persons on the basis of their imputed or real sexual orientation or gender identities.

This is all due to a great amount of research that has been done to determine what the causes of the “different” or “alternative” sexualities could be, in order to see whether it could be a choice of an individual that could be altered in order to protect the community against a terrible danger, as was believed until very recently.

#### *4.3.2 Research in Causative Factors for Same-Sex Sexual Behaviour*

As discussed in both chapters 2 and 3, abnormal sexuality was pathologised not only by Paul and Chrysostom, but also by ancient medical practitioners. Sadly, the church still continues to advocate this pathological attitude. Therefore, causative factors for the exhibiting of abnormal sexuality must be explained to show the range of choices (if any) open to those accused of exhibiting abnormal behaviour.

##### *a. Biological Research*

The limbic system in the brain is where most of human behaviour and emotion are situated. In the evolutionary sense, it is a very old part of the brain. Studies by Ellis and Ames (1987) showed that already in utero this part of the brain is very sensitive to the effects of testosterone (ASSAf 2015:25). Studies such as those done by Weill in 2009 also confirmed that higher order areas of the brain – such as areas of thought processing and the Brocca and Wernicke areas, where we think and where language is developed and used - have little or no effect on direct sexual orientation (ASSAF 2015:25). This challenges the views that suggest there is some choice

regarding sexual orientation. During 2015 the Academy of Science of South Africa published a joint study (ASSAf 2015:25) showing that sexual orientation is innate to a person's biological and psychological development (here I provide an overview of the ASSAf study with reference to its main premises and sources). For most people neuro-hormonal theory suggests that predilection for all sexual orientations are established before birth, in the first six months in utero under the direction of various genes and hormones, as proven by Ellis and Ames (1987). The type of hormone, its time of onset of action and blood as well as cerebro-spinal fluid concentrations are influenced either by genomes, at times by environmental stress inflicted on mothers during pregnancy, or even immunological factors which have an influence on particular sexualities.

In 1981 Pillard and colleagues showed that same-sex oriented men are more probable to have a higher number of brothers who are homosexual (the incidence was 18–25% whilst in the case of heterosexual men only 4%) (ASSAf 2015:26). This was confirmed by another study by Pillard and Weinrich in 1986. Diamond showed in 2014 that male homosexuality is substantially familial, be it due to genetic or environmental factors (ASSAf 2015:26). Blanchard (2001) as well as Dawood et al (2009) have shown that this familial tendency is applicable even if brothers have not grown up together or in the same environment (ASSAf 2015:26). These studies suggest that there is a heritable aspect to male homosexuality, but somewhat less so for females.

If twins are used in studies of genetics an advantage is that the sample individuals share the same chromosomes. Identical twins share the same DNA and studies of their physiological and developmental parallels and differences during growth are foundational in understanding the impact of genes on behaviour. When certain traits appear frequently in fraternal twins and then appear even more often in identical twins, the case is boosted that such traits have a significant heritable component. Because identical twins have exactly the same traits, 100% of the time and non-identical twins the same traits 50% of the time, the assumption can be made that such traits are strongly or even exclusively genetic. If they have the same trait they can be said to be concordant (ASSAf 2015:28).

During the past two decades studies have shown significant concordance for sexual orientation in identical twins, confirming a very high likelihood of a concurrence attribute for both male and female homosexuality by Bailey et al (2000); Bailey and Pillard (1995); Boomsma et al (2002) and Johnson et al (2009) (see also ASSAf 2015:28). Concordance for male identical twins was shown for up to 75% and non-concordance for up to 30%. Whitam et al (1993) proved that these patterns are also applicable to situations where environmental factors are excluded (ASSAf 2015:28). The concordance rate for same-sex female twins was even higher - up to 75% (Whitam et al in ASSAf 2015:28).

These studies suggest that a genetic effect of some kind is prone to account for about one third of any explanation of same-sex appeal in male group studies (Langström et al 2010; in ASSAf 2015:29). There is enough indication that there is a heritable factor to sexual orientation, a genetic constituent that already acts in utero, and interacts with both the shared and non-shared environment, both in utero and during upbringing. It suggests a maternal conduit for the heritability of genetic factors which are at work because much of the clustering observed seem to pass by means of maternal family lines.

Already in 1993 Hamer and his colleagues found that the genetic component for same-sex orientation is most probably situated on the X-chromosome, with the causative region probably Xq28 on the X-chromosome of homosexual men (Hamer et al 1993; in ASSAf 2015:30). The study, however, was not able to identify a specific gene (there are four million base pairs just in the small region of the X-chromosome examined, and several hundred genes are located in this area). Even now, there is no one working in genetic research expecting to identify a single responsible gene, but rather to identify the existence of genetic marker patterns (Hu et al 1995; in ASSAf 2015:30). Linkage patterns are now being studied. These linkages are in the pericentrometric region on chromosome 8 and, as Hamer and his team found in 1993, in the Xq28 region of the X-chromosome (Sanders et al 2014; in ASSAf 2015:30).

Then epi-marks came into account. Epi-marks activate or inactivate certain genes. By means of molecular or biochemical changes, the exact moment of the production

of hormones are regulated. There are studies that suggest trans-generational epigenetic inheritance. This implies that in some instances stronger than average epi-mark impacts on sexual orientation – although not on secondary sex characteristics – are carried over to the next generation in an opposite-sex dominative way (Rice et al 2012; in ASSAf 2015:31).

Usually epi-marks are deleted from one generation to the next, but studies suggest that they can skip erasure and be transferred to the next generation. When this happens and they are passed from a man to his future daughter, it might make her over-sensitive to the effects of testosterone or when passed from mother to future son, the son might become under-sensitive to testosterone. The study of Rice et al (2012) has shown that even identical twins might have very different epigenetic profiles (ASSAf 2015:31). However, some mothers of homosexual men have what can be termed an “extreme skewing” of X-chromosome-inactivation. Bocklandt (2006) has shown that although mothers have two X-chromosomes, one is usually naturally “switched off” or inactive. This might not be the case in the mothers of some homosexual men (Bocklandt et al 2006; in ASSAf 2015:31).

Another factor that might have an influence on the formation of sexual orientation is endocrine-disruptors. These include pharmaceuticals such as dioxin, polychlorinated biphenyls, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, some pesticides and others such as bisphenol (Blumberg et al 2011; in ASSAf 2015:32). They have a direct effect on sexual dimorphism in utero. Substances like these have been shown to have estrogenic, androgenic, anti-estrogenic and or anti-androgenic activity. They affect embryogenesis, early childhood development and fertility, this happens due to their impact on the areas in the brain that are related with sexual performing and orientation.

#### *b. Environmental and Social Factors*

For the utmost part of human history sexuality were controlled, in most societies, by religion or religiously-infused ideas (Parker 2009; in ASSAf 2015:41). During the past 150 years scientists started searching for answers as to why individuals belonged to a distinctive class of people engaging in specific sex-acts. The basis of

theories of psychologists trying to explain male same-sex practitioners seem to consist of precarious parenting styles. The argument entails that gay men are in some way hostile towards their fathers and close to their mothers (Seutter & Rovers 2004 in ASSAf 2015:41). For the lesbian community the presence of a hostile mother is identified with the presence also of some dissonance with a prominent male figure like a father (Rosario & Scrimshaw 2014 in ASSAf 2015:42).

There are also those who argue that the presence of a mother who is contemptuous of masculinity, childhood seduction by another male figure, peer-labelling of a boy due to poor sport accomplishment or shyness, might force someone into adopting the homosexual community (Nicolosi & Nicolosi 2001 in ASSAf 2015:43). There are some scientists, like Beckstead (2001), who opine that “non-normative” sexual behaviour of a child might reinforce the absence of the parent of the same gender (ASSAf 2015:43).

Beckstead (2001) has also proven that although there may be poorer relationships reported in families of homosexuals with their fathers, because of the “non-normative” behaviour the child displays, the parent then becomes disparaged (ASSAf 2015:43). Family behavioural patterns have not substantially been proven to suggest that the nature of parenting or early childhood experiences implicate the development of homosexuality. This suggests that biological factors play a much greater part in the aetiology of a homosexual orientation. This was also confirmed at the Royal College of Psychiatrist’s annual meeting during 2010 (as is pointed out in ASSAf 2015:44).

### *c. Psychological Theory on the Origins of Homosexuality*

According to Freud in his work, *The Ego and the Id* (1923), mourning has a very important impact on the formation of ego. He argues that when someone loses somebody whom he/she loves, the ego incorporates that lost other into the very structure of the ego. The other is then conserved within the ego by means of acts of imitating aspects of the lost other. The pain of the loss of the lost other is thus overcome by a distinctive act of identification with the other. This assimilation of the other into the ego-structure cannot be timeous but becomes a permanent new

structure of the ego and the identity gets altered by permanent internalisation of the other's characteristics (Wolheim 1974:172–195).

When an ambivalent relationship is terminated by means of loss, it is the ambivalence that becomes internalised as a self-critical or self-debilitating being, where the role which the other is supposed to have occupied is now being occupied and directed by the ego itself. Freud (1923:170) stated that: “The narcissistic identification with the object then becomes a substitute for erotic cathexis, the result of which is that in spite of the conflict with the loved person the love-relation need not be given up”. Later in his life Freud made it clear that, for the formation of the ego, constant internalization and sustaining of love-objects are imperative (Butler 1990:79).

Freud was of the opinion that this process might lead to a condition that was known as melancholia, but that it is also responsible for gender identity formation (Butler 1990:79). He also states that the “character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexis and that it contains the history of those object-choices” (Freud 1923:19).

The incest-taboo plays a fundamental part in the gender identity formation. It originates a love-object loss for the ego and the ego strikes back by internalisation of the tabooed love-object or object of desire. When the desired lost loved object abides in a heterosexual desired prohibited union, the object is denied and not the modality of desire. Therefore the desire becomes deflected from the object and projected on to other objects of the opposite sex. When the forbidden union is of a homosexual nature, both the desire and object need to be forsaken and thus become subject to internalisation by the ego (Butler 1990:79–80). So, in the modern world a boy should internalise objects in such a way that he becomes an accepted heterosexual adult male.

But such psychological dynamics are much more complicated than simply integrating objects as shown above. Now enters the super-ego (Freud 1923:24):

The super-ego is, however, not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id: it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against these choices. Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: "You ought to be like this (like your father)"... [It also comprises the prohibition:] "You may not be like this (like you father) - that is, you may not do all that he does; some things are his prerogative".

The super-ego performs an important role in gender identity formation through the regulation of the ego by means of suitable rechanneling and sublimation of desire (Butler 1990:85). It permits the parent to be internalised, not only as a separating, but also a withholding love-object. Thus, the ego gets to be prohibited from desiring a parent but gets to be allowed to preserve a parent as object. Now, the solution to the Oedipal dilemma can turn out to be just as sophisticated. The prohibition of the opposite-sexed parent might lead either to identification with the sex of the parent lost or a repudiation of that identification leading to a deflection of heterosexual desire (Butler 1990:85). The resolution of the Oedipal dilemma is firstly controlled by the taboo on homosexuality and only secondly by the incest taboo and this is regulated by the super-ego. This leads to identification with the same-sex love-object and internalising of both the object and the homosexual cathexis. Therefore unresolved object-relations are resolved and the subject turns out to be homosexual (Butler 1990:86). The loss of the object, in this case, is often not initiated by death, separation or the breaking of emotional ties, but by a taboo accompanied by a set of punishments.

But now the question arises: what is this prohibition, especially in a baby not yet able to use or yet aware of language? Foucault gives a very clear answer in saying that the law on presupposition of original desire silences and transmutes our subconscious desires into a secondary and unavoidably dissatisfying form or expression (Foucault 1990:81). He is of the opinion that the desire might be the result of the law itself. It creates and maintains "repressed desire".

The fact such a taboo against incest exists implies that a prohibition against homosexual desire must also exist on a notion of disposition as libidinal and primarily

subconscious. It must be temporally discreet and ontologically incomprehensible (Butler 1990:89).

Hall (1992:275) states that: “reflect[tive] of the growing complexity of the modern world and the awareness that this inner core of the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, but was (is) formed in relation to ‘significant others’, who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols - the culture - of the world he/she inhabited”. We all thus have identities that are fluid and continuously being transformed by the systems that surround us (Hall 1992:277). All people in this matter are not biologically defined when gender comes into the conversation but all people have different identities at different times.

Taking this basic overview of biological and psychological research on sexual orientation into account, it becomes very problematic to simply appropriate discourses of “nature” and even “normality” in the context of homosexuality; nor are simplistic arguments for or against the role of “upbringing” in any way helpful. The matter is simply more complex than what is often expressed in discourses and debates about homosexuality, especially in religious contexts. Of course, ancient authors like Paul and Chrysostom had no concept of such biological dynamics, so their arguments remain on the level informed by the medical and philosophical knowledge of the time. Yet, the appropriation of such discourses in modern debates, without taking cognisance of the developments noted above remains highly contentious and, in essence, biased. It is possible to trace some of this bias in modern trends of biblical interpretation.

#### *4.3.3 Biblical Interpretation and Homosexuality*

According to Martin (2006:17), the way biblical interpretation, and especially historical criticism, has been used to find a “universal” Christian meaning of biblical texts (he refers to biblical foundationalism) has not succeeded. Several scholars have used historical criticism only to come to different and often opposing conclusions. The idea that historical criticism is more “objective” than other forms of biblical interpretation has proven to be a fallacy. Historical criticism has in this way, failed to provide answers to the meaning of texts in their ancient contexts and this

has made the application of these texts for (modern ethical purposes) even more difficult. I am not saying that historical criticism of the Bible has no value, but rather that its limits should be recognised, and that it should not necessarily enjoy a more prominent or authoritative place above other modes of interpretation. Martin (2006:18) suggests that rhetorical analysis should be used in addition to historical criticism, and in doing so one should look at texts as language that means to persuade.

The variety of interpretations that related biblical discourse to gender identity and homosexuality, specifically, almost seems endless. For instance, in Romans 1:18–27 Paul is often thought to condemn homosexuality (in the modern sense). By means of his condemnation of the disruption of hierarchy, specifically gender hierarchy, Paul always assumes that the male is superior to the female. Countryman (2007:426–427), however, is of the opinion that Paul in this specific passage of Romans is more concerned with purity issues. Clark (1999:128–134) has successfully shown that the Church Fathers have often set up one biblical text against the other in order to promote asceticism or the avoidance of sexual intimacy. Often, modern biblical liberal text interpreters explain this relevant part of Romans 1, supposedly speaking of homosexuality, as actually being about idolatry and not same-sex relations, trying to shed a new light on the meaning of the text (Goss 1994:92–93). Boswell (2009:11–12) tries to explain Romans 1 as only applicable to people who went against their own nature, in other words, heterosexuals who engaged in same-sex activities, implying thereby, adventurous heterosexuals. Other interpreters focus on what the author intended to say and in this way draw the attention away from the actual meaning of the text. In this way, the intended meaning of the text becomes more important than the actual meaning of the text (Martin 2006:23). We therefore see, here, such a variety of interpretations - appropriations and misappropriations - ancient and modern - that are based on varying presuppositions and premises.

If Romans 1 is to be looked at in a narrative rhetorical way, the creation account becomes important. In this narrative, the relation of male and female is important. The fact that people were created man and woman, the one to complement the body of the other, is assumed to be apparent and a kind of axiom. This is assumed to be inborn knowledge. It is assumed that the ancients were aware of a basic masculinity and femininity which existed in everyone (Lacquer 1990:198–199). This is explicitly

expressed in Romans 1 as the importance of the joining of male and female in sex and the specific kind of joining in sex that is forbidden. The question is how much weight should be given to rules derived from a text that is seen only as a narrative where the inclusion of gay or lesbian people is considered, people who use narrative analysis often use Acts 15. People who practice homosexuality are often referred to as the “gentiles” discussed here in order for them to be included in the Christian community (Siker 1994:178–194).

There are also scholars who are of the opinion that texts are merely quotes used by Paul, and that these texts cannot be seen to have literal meanings as uttered by Paul and that these texts should not be seen as contextual (Martin 2006:24). These scholars are of the opinion that Paul might not even have been familiar with the contexts of the texts that he quoted but merely did so in order to support his own statements. Martin (2006:25) states: “I am not arguing that scripture is irrelevant for ethical reflection. It simply cannot be used in the modern foundationalist way with the expectation that reliably secure ethical guidance will result.” Let us have a look at some of these modern interpretations more closely.

*a. Robert Gagnon*

In his book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (2001) Gagnon used a very firm historical criticism to evaluate the topic. Gagnon departs from the point of view that the Bible “speaks clearly/obviously”. However, in spite of using these clear speaking words, Gagnon (2001:229–298) often contradicts himself. By using syllogisms he elaborates on how nature should make it clear why homosexuality should be seen as something that is “obviously” wrong, but then goes on to state that nature is of such a *nature* that it could mean to imply almost and just about anything. Sadly, he is in his opinions very derogatory towards male homosexuals but less so towards lesbians. He also contradicts himself on his view of that of Jesus on homosexuality, saying that “data” clearly points to Jesus’ stance on homosexuality (2001:187), implying thereby that Jesus had put such “data” in place, but in fact, Gagnon could only have guessed about what idea Jesus could have had, since Jesus is almost silent on the matter of same-sex passion. Gagnon assumes that Jesus was very unlikely to have supported homosexual relations of any sort (2001:485). To our knowledge this was never mentioned by Jesus. Gagnon assumes that this was what

Jesus might have been thinking and what Jesus might subsequently have said. In doing so, Gagnon transports the authorial intentions of the historical writer into the twenty-first century (Martin 2006:27). The problem with this kind of analysis is that the rules of complex ancient contexts are changed. When texts are studied, caution should be taken not to imagine the imagined views of a sometimes “fabricated” ancient author (Martin 2006:27).

*b. Richard Hays*

Hays focuses mainly on “hearing” the witness of the New Testament when doing text interpretation and then appropriates the witness into the life of the church (Hays 1996:462). In Hays’ way of textual interpretation the text interpreter assumes a passive role in that he/she has to “hear” the text. Hays (1996:237) warns that he is afraid that some text interpreters might interpret texts in a sinful or selfish way which only suit their own will to justify whatever they want in a religious way. Hays disagrees with Gagnon in the sense that he acknowledges the presence of the obvious meanings of texts (see Hays 1996:3–6, 310).

In fact, according to Martin (2006:29), what Hays only wants to achieve is to establish a method that remains true to the “voice” of the New Testament. According to Martin, this is dangerous, because such rhetoric turns the text itself into an agent with its own interpretative agencies. In the end, Hays, much like Gagnon, very much turns to authorial intent even though he uses historical criticism. For Hays ancient contexts give meaning to texts but Hays insists that the way a text is interpreted must be based on the text itself (which is biblical foundationalism, in Martin’s view) and meaning should not be superimposed (Hays 1996:194). The texts, to Hays, gain meaning from the way they “speak”.

*c. Francis Watson*

In his 1997 publication, *Text and the Truth*, Watson is also very convinced of authorial intent. He is less concerned with context dependence in spite of using historical criticism. Watson is of the opinion that the texts say what they want to say and that the reader is obligated to listen to the texts (Martin 2006:32). Watson, like Hays, is of the opinion that the text interpreter should assume a passive role when analysing a text (Watson 1997:110). The danger here, in views like those of Hays

and Watson, is that such a view opens up the possibility of what we might call biblical “ventriloquism”, when one can make the Bible “say” what one wants, which to an extent then “absolves” the interpreter from ethical responsibility. This has become common in modern invective against homosexuality.

*d. William Countryman*

In contrast to the other authors discussed above, Countryman is of the opinion that any text interpreter should be involved in a very creative act whilst interpreting texts (Countryman 2003:11). However, the reality of the text that is being studied and is studied and created by the interpreter is, according to Martin (2006:33), always influenced by the perception of reality of and by the interpreter. There is no such thing as objective reading.

Mediation always takes place between the text, the context of the text and the interpreter of the text. According to Martin (2206:33), the trap Countryman falls into is that he often contradicts himself. Countryman does however point out that the same text is often read by the same group of people who have been socialised to read a specific group of text in the same way. These people are then supposed to come to the same conclusions and to deduce the same meanings, or to put it differently, the texts are supposed to “speak” to these people in the same manner. This does not always happen though (Fish 1980:315). This only goes to prove that texts do not necessarily provide the same meaning to the same people but that certain meanings are attached to certain texts. Biblical interpretations of homosexuality (but also marriage, divorce, and celibacy) function well to show the complexities of scriptural appropriation and misappropriation.

Chrysostom did not simply “read” Paul, and despite Chrysostom’s admirable ekphrasis of Paul, this study has shown that Chrysostom appropriates Pauline sexualities in strategic ways that affirm his own views on the matter, despite the differences between Chrysostom and Paul. For instance, despite having fundamental differences on the nature of desire, on the surface it seems as if Chrysostom simply copies Paul. But over-emphasising some matters, like celibacy, and under-emphasising others, like the possibility of remarriage, shows that the appropriation of Pauline sexualities is never “objective” or innocent. It was not the

case between Paul and Chrysostom, and it is not the case between the Bible and many modern interpreters.

#### 4.4 CONCLUSION

How far has the modern community moved towards being liberated from sexual bias? Moderns who condemn male or female same-sex encounters or relations on the basis of Paul's condemnation thereof make themselves guilty of the same degree of inherent hatred of "sexual minorities" (for the lack of a better word) in ancient times (Martin 2006:48).

Unfortunately, as stated in the introduction, the condemnation of gay people by some modern scholars in biblical and religious studies, to achieve their own agendas (like Chrysostom, although the agendas were different), have led to much unhappiness and sadness in our time. Martin (2006:49) states that in spite of many changes in Christianity in the past 300 years, far too much cynical manipulation have taken place in order to gauge the ethical value of scripture. Ethical values and discourse should be based on the context of texts in which these points of view are formed and a precarious starting point should be assumed.

In general very few texts that openly condemn homosexuality exist in the New Testament. The words *arsenokoitēs* and *malakos*, however, receive a disproportionate amount of attention, as both are cited in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and later in 1 Timothy 1:10. Especially, during the late twentieth century these words have been taken to refer to people who engage in at least male-to-male homosexual relations. This meaning has in general also been regarded as having been Paul's stance on "homosexuality" (Martin 2006:37). Martin (2006:38) is of the opinion that if these texts are to be alienated from their original contexts and historical translation problems are not taken into account, these texts can very easily be used for harmful ideological purposes - like alienating gay or lesbian people from the church.

The Bible should not be used simplistically as a rule book by modern-day Christians; it should be kept in mind that all the letters Paul wrote were written in order to achieve a certain goal. The same is true of Chrysostom's appropriations of Pauline sexualities - they were strategic and related to the agendas of orthodoxy at the time. As shown in this study, with our knowledge gained through science, and in many

different fields of science, should we not apply this knowledge to realise that some people do not have choices when it comes to sexual preference or orientation? Should we, with what we now know, still take texts out of their contexts and make judgements or exclude people from the gospel of love that Jesus embodied? I am of the opinion that a more tolerant and multi-disciplinary dialogue be cultivated in church and (South African) society with regards to not only homosexuality, but individuals' sexual choices and preferences overall (as related to marriage, having children, divorce, and so on).

The heterosexual Christian community then also needs to move in a direction to accept homosexual Christians and Christians not conforming to the pattern of the heterosexual nuclear family into their community (Siker 1994:188). Gay and lesbian members of the body of Christ should, with all the knowledge we now possess about sexuality, be allowed to be part of a Christian community without bias or victimisation. Moreover, we need to move away from the idealisation and normativisation of certain sexualities above others. We have seen in this study, and in this chapter in particular, that marriage and having children was *not* the ideal in most circles of the early church. Rather than asking if certain sexualities are “wrong”, we should perhaps ask why certain groups in the church are so disturbed by the perceived “otherness” of other groups - which is a topic for a totally different study.

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